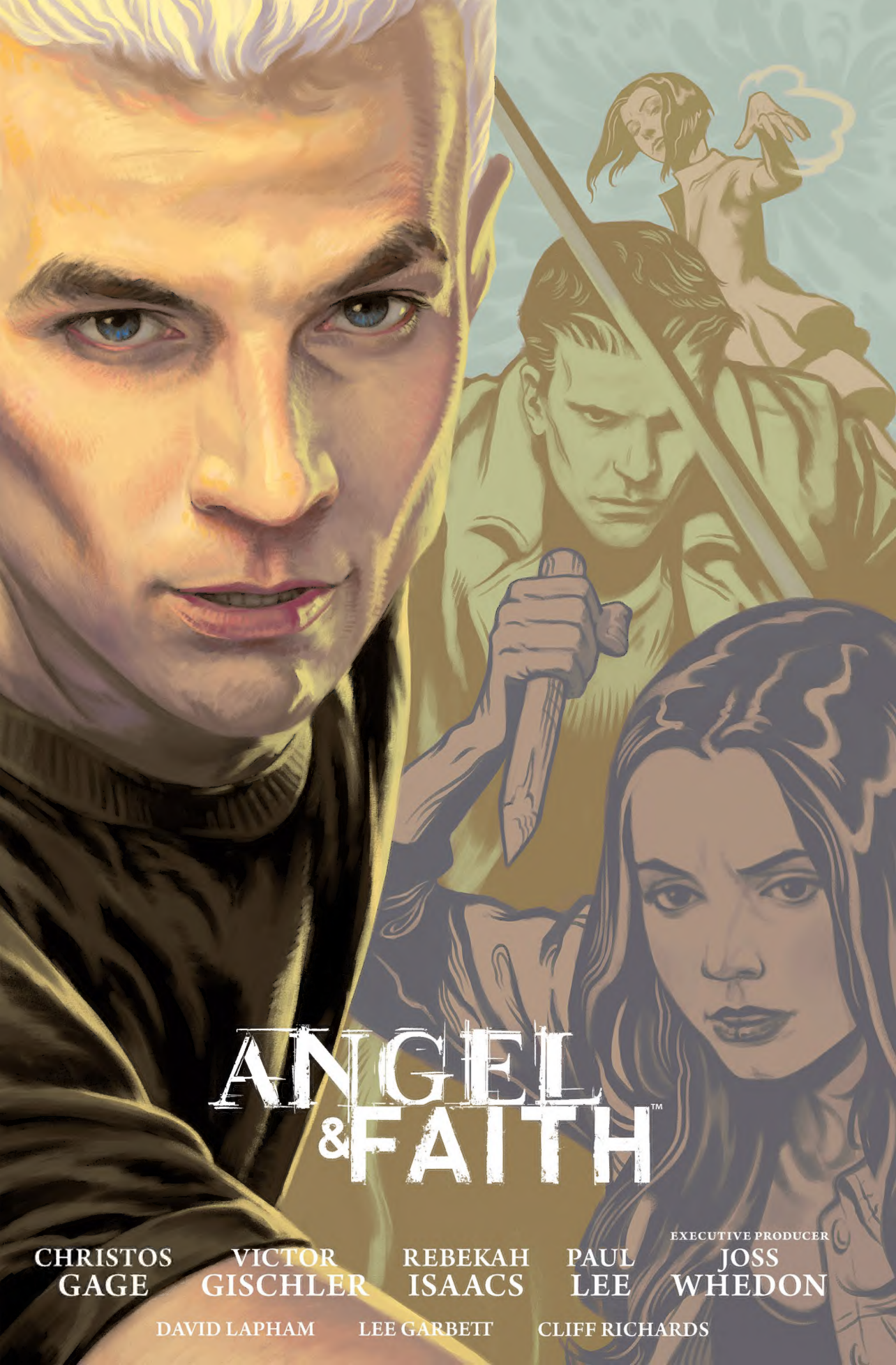

CHRISTOS GAGE
VICTOR GISCHLER
REBEKAH ISAACS
PAUL LEE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
JOSS WHEDON
DAVID LAPHAM
LEE GARBETT
CLIFF RICHARDS

SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

Angel's quest to resurrect Rupert Giles has caught the attention of an old friend and former witch: Willow! She's arrived in London with a quest of her own and a proposition: she'll help Angel if he'll help her to connect to his son, Connor—the only one known to have torn open a doorway to Quor'toth, the worst of all hell dimensions. If Connor can help, Willow will be one step closer to restoring magic to the world, and Angel will be that much closer to returning Giles to life. Luckily, with such a dangerous scheme, the pair have Faith to watch their backs and keep them on task. But when they reach Quor'toth, their plans must change, and they'll all have to fight to survive . . .

Elsewhere, after parting ways with Buffy the Vampire Slayer—an on-again, off-again love interest—Spike has taken his bug-filled spaceship to the dark side of the moon, where he plans to drown his sorrows. Unfortunately, his plans for wallowing are interrupted by a gang of demons trying to make their way to Sunnydale!

ANGEL & FAITH™

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SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

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DARK HORSE BOOKS

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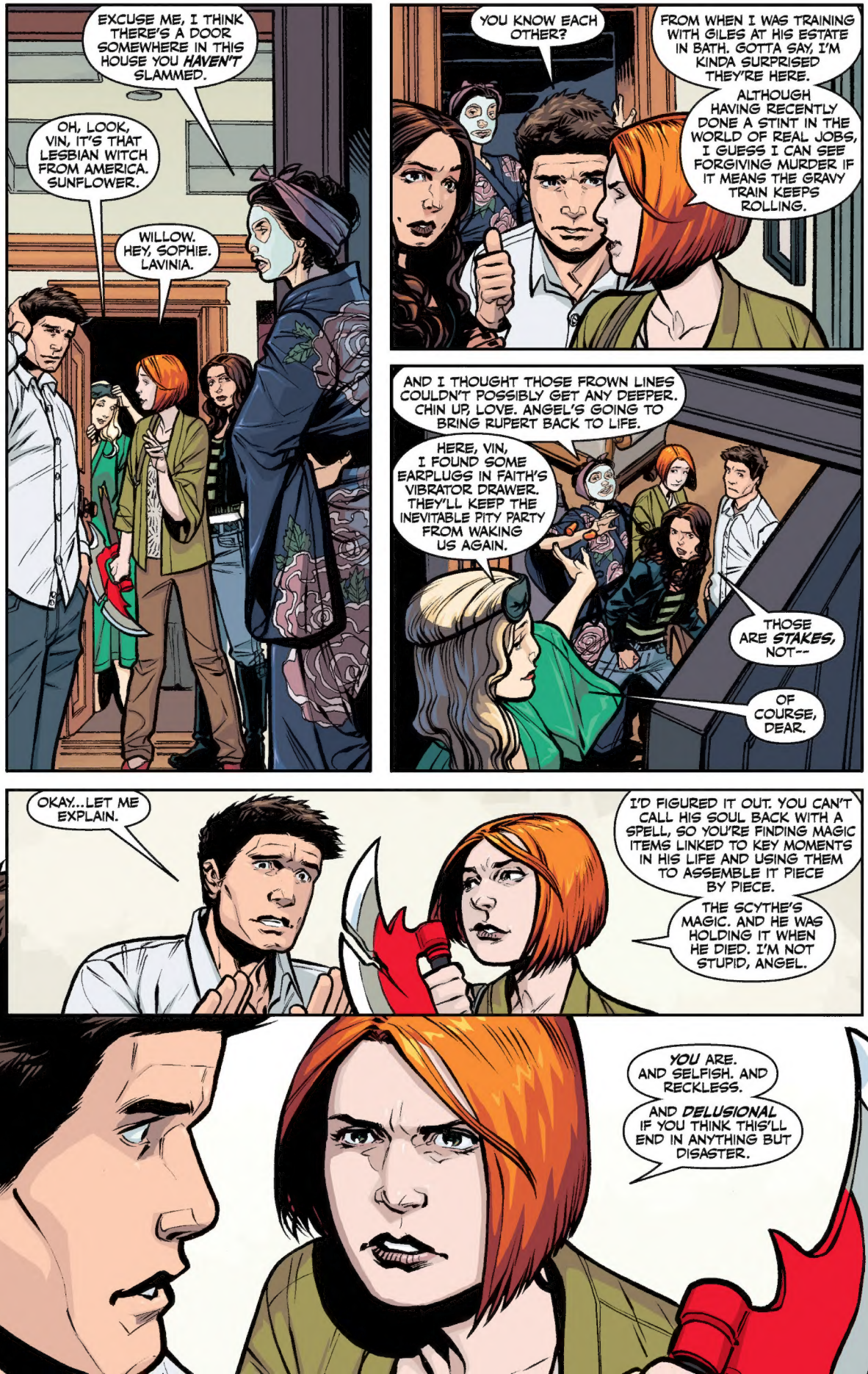
FAMILY REUNION

PART ONE


EXCUSE ME, I THINK THERE'S A DOOR SOMEWHERE IN THIS HOUSE YOU *HAVEN'T* SLAMMED.
OH, LOOK, VIN, IT'S THAT LESBIAN WITCH FROM AMERICA. SUNFLOWER.
WILLOW. HEY, SOPHIE. LAVINIA.
YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?
FROM WHEN I WAS TRAINING WITH GILES AT HIS ESTATE IN BATH. GOTTA SAY, I'M KINDA SURPRISED THEY'RE HERE.
ALTHOUGH HAVING RECENTLY DONE A STINT IN THE WORLD OF REAL JOBS, I GUESS I CAN SEE FORGIVING MURDER IF IT MEANS THE GRAVY TRAIN KEEPS ROLLING.
AND I THOUGHT THOSE FROWN LINES COULDN'T POSSIBLY GET ANY DEEPER. CHIN UP, LOVE. ANGEL'S GOING TO BRING RUPERT BACK TO LIFE.
HERE, VIN, I FOUND SOME EARPLUGS IN FAITH'S VIBRATOR DRAWER. THEY'LL KEEP THE INEVITABLE PITY PARTY FROM WAKING US AGAIN.
THOSE ARE *STAKES*, NOT--
OF COURSE, DEAR.
OKAY...LET ME EXPLAIN.
I'D FIGURED IT OUT. YOU CAN'T CALL HIS SOUL BACK WITH A SPELL, SO YOU'RE FINDING MAGIC ITEMS LINKED TO KEY MOMENTS IN HIS LIFE AND USING THEM TO ASSEMBLE IT PIECE BY PIECE.
THE SCYTHE'S MAGIC. AND HE WAS HOLDING IT WHEN HE DIED. I'M NOT STUPID, ANGEL.
YOU ARE. AND SELFISH. AND RECKLESS.
AND *DELUSIONAL* IF YOU THINK THIS'LL END IN ANYTHING BUT DISASTER.

DID YOU TELL--
BUFFY? NO. SHE'S GOT ENOUGH ON HER PLATE. NONE OF WHICH IS YOUR BUSINESS. THE LAST THING SHE NEEDS IS YOU BRINGING BACK BAD MEMORIES. SHE WENT THROUGH *HELL* AFTER SHE WAS RESURRECTED.

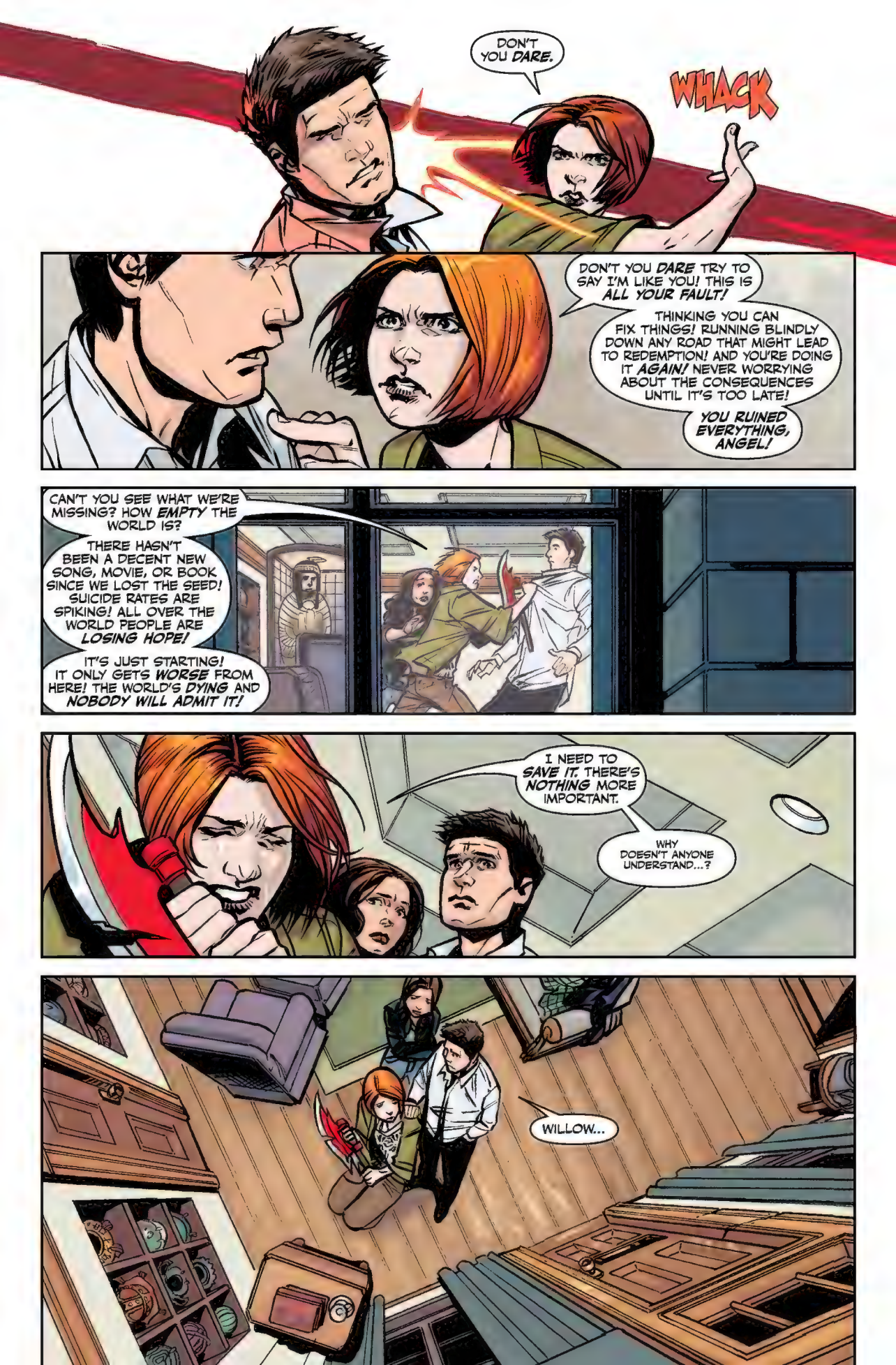
YOU MEAN AFTER *YOU* RESURRECTED HER.
FROM A *MAGICAL* DEATH. WHEN MAGIC *EXISTED*. AND I HAD *NO IDEA* HOW MUCH PAIN IT WOULD BRING ALL OF US. *ESPECIALLY* HER.

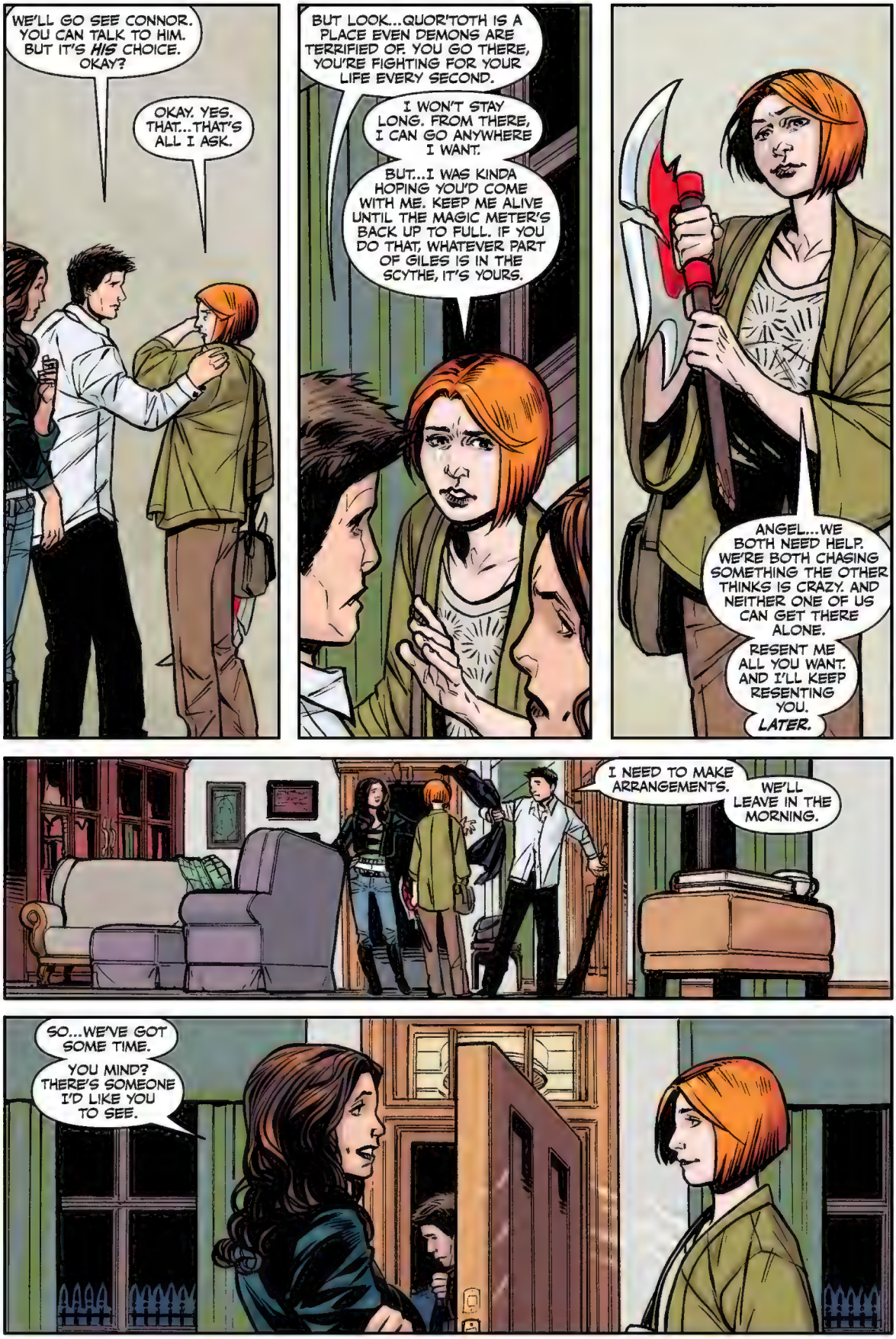
YOU REGRET IT?

NOT EVEN FOR A SECOND.
BUT I'M NOT SURE SHE'D SAY THE SAME.

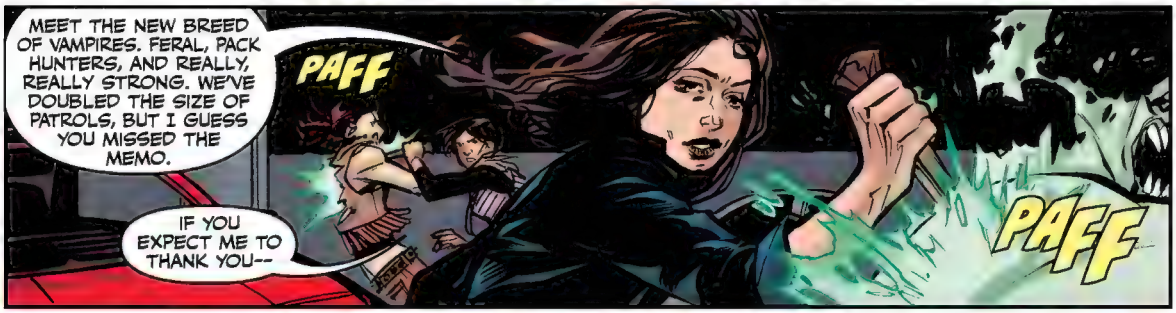
SO YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY TO TELL ME TO GO TO HELL?
NO. AS HORRIBLE AN IDEA AS I THINK THIS IS, I'M GOING TO HELP YOU. 'CAUSE I NEED YOU TO HELP ME.
TO BRING MAGIC BACK TO EARTH...I NEED *CONNOR*.

HIS SON CONNOR?
I NEED TO LEAVE THIS DIMENSION TO BRING MAGIC BACK. GO TO A PLACE THAT STILL HAS MAGIC. BUT ALL THE PORTALS ARE CLOSED.
CONNOR GREW UP IN QUOR'TOTH. THE ONE HELL DIMENSION YOU DON'T REACH THROUGH PORTALS. YOU ONLY GET THERE BY TEARING A HOLE IN REALITY.
THAT TAKES CENTURIES OF ACCUMULATED DARK MAGIC. BUT I FOUND A RITUAL...A SHORTCUT. MAGIC ITEMS ARE LIKE BATTERIES--MOST STILL HAVE RESIDUAL ENERGIES LEFT IN THEM.
THE SCYTHE IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL. I THINK I CAN USE IT TO TEAR OPEN THE RIFT...IF I HAVE SOMETHING "STEEPED IN THE ESSENCE OF QUOR'TOTH" TO SERVE AS A COMPASS.
LIKE A BOY WHO SPENT THE FIRST SEVENTEEN YEARS OF HIS LIFE THERE.
HE BARELY KNOWS ME. I NEED YOU TO HELP ME CONVINCE HIM.
LISTEN, ANGEL AND CONNOR AREN'T EXACTLY ON "TAKE YOUR SON TO WORK" TERMS. ANGEL'S BEEN DUCKING HIS CALLS LIKE HE'S A DRUNK HOOKUP.
WHICH I TOLD HIM IS BEING A TOOL, BUT HE WON'T LISTEN. AND CONNOR FINALLY STOPPED CALLING. WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE IS.
HE'S IN SCHOOL. HE HAS A GIRLFRIEND. HE'S HAPPY. I...HAVE SOMEONE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM.
YOU WHAT? SO YOU'VE JUST DECIDED NOT TO TELL ME ANYTHING NOW?
IT'S A FAMILY MATTER, FAITH. THE POINT IS, LIKE I'VE BEEN SAYING--HE'S BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME.
BUT YOU WANT ME TO FIND THE SON I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE FOR AND RUIN THE LIFE HE'S BUILT. ASK HIM TO GO BACK TO THE HELL HE GREW UP IN BECAUSE OF ME.
FOR SOME WILD-GOOSE CHASE. SOMETHING THAT'S NOT EVEN POSSIBLE.
HERE I WAS ASHAMED TO SEE YOU.


DON'T YOU DARE.
WHACK
DON'T YOU DARE TRY TO SAY I'M LIKE YOU! THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!
THINKING YOU CAN FIX THINGS! RUNNING BLINDLY DOWN ANY ROAD THAT MIGHT LEAD TO REDEMPTION! AND YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN! NEVER WORRYING ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!
YOU RUINED EVERYTHING, ANGEL!
CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT WE'RE MISSING? HOW EMPTY THE WORLD IS?
THERE HASN'T BEEN A DECENT NEW SONG, MOVIE, OR BOOK SINCE WE LOST THE SEED! SUICIDE RATES ARE SPIKING! ALL OVER THE WORLD PEOPLE ARE LOSING HOPE!
IT'S JUST STARTING! IT ONLY GETS WORSE FROM HERE! THE WORLD'S DYING AND NOBODY WILL ADMIT IT!
I NEED TO SAVE IT. THERE'S NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT.
WHY DOESN'T ANYONE UNDERSTAND...?
WILLOW...


WE'LL GO SEE CONNOR. YOU CAN TALK TO HIM. BUT IT'S HIS CHOICE. OKAY?
OKAY. YES. THAT...THAT'S ALL I ASK.
BUT LOOK...QUOR'TOTH IS A PLACE EVEN DEMONS ARE TERRIFIED OF. YOU GO THERE, YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE EVERY SECOND.
I WON'T STAY LONG. FROM THERE, I CAN GO ANYWHERE I WANT.
BUT...I WAS KINDA HOPING YOU'D COME WITH ME. KEEP ME ALIVE UNTIL THE MAGIC METER'S BACK UP TO FULL. IF YOU DO THAT, WHATEVER PART OF GILES IS IN THE SCYTHE, IT'S YOURS.
ANGEL...WE BOTH NEED HELP. WE'RE BOTH CHASING SOMETHING THE OTHER THINKS IS CRAZY. AND NEITHER ONE OF US CAN GET THERE ALONE.
RESENT ME ALL YOU WANT. AND I'LL KEEP RESENTING YOU. LATER.
I NEED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS.
WE'LL LEAVE IN THE MORNING.
SO...WE'VE GOT SOME TIME.
YOU MIND? THERE'S SOMEONE I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE.

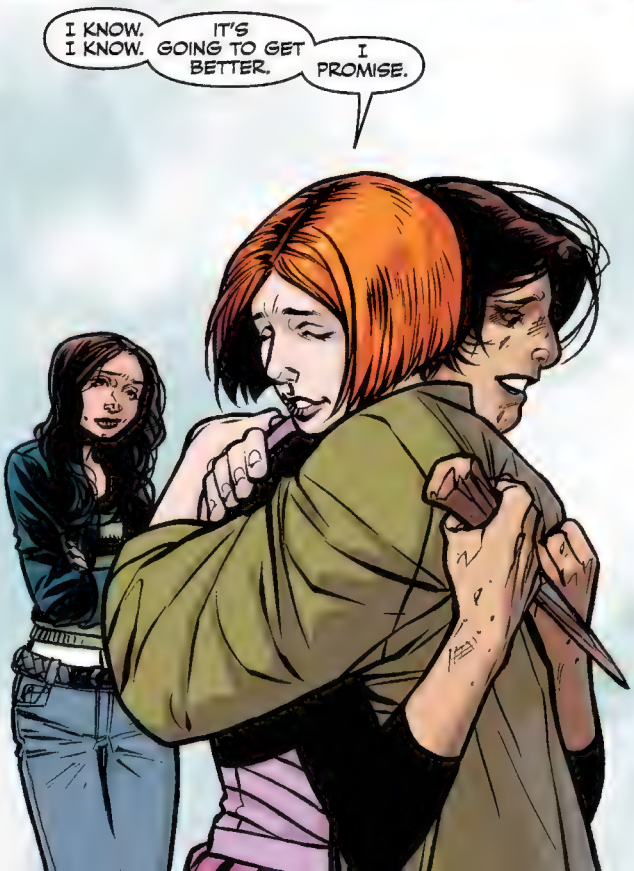
HACKNEY.
HRRAAA!
PAFF
COME ON THEN, YOU BASTARDS! COME AND GET ME!
HNGH!
S-SAY AN ACTUAL WORD, DAMN YOU...
GGRRRHH!!
PAFF
ZOMPIRES AREN'T VERY SOCIAL.
PAFF


MEET THE NEW BREED OF VAMPIRES. FERAL, PACK HUNTERS, AND REALLY, REALLY STRONG. WE'VE DOUBLED THE SIZE OF PATROLS, BUT I GUESS YOU MISSED THE MEMO.
PAFF
IF YOU EXPECT ME TO THANK YOU--
PAFF

NO. YOU WERE RIGHT. WHAT I ASKED YOU TO DO WAS STUPID AND WRONG AND...LOOK, I'M NOT EVEN HERE TO TALK ABOUT THAT.
THERE'S SOMEONE I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO SEE.
THERE ISN'T ANYONE IN THE ENTIRE BLOODY WORLD I WANT TO--

UM, HI?
FAITH, ARE YOU SURE WE KNOW EACH--
OH MY GOD. WILLOW?

I'M NADIRA. YOU--YOU HEALED ME, SAVED MY LIFE...AFTER MY SQUAD WAS SLAUGHTERED IN--IN--
THE AZORES. OH, YOU POOR THING, COME HERE...

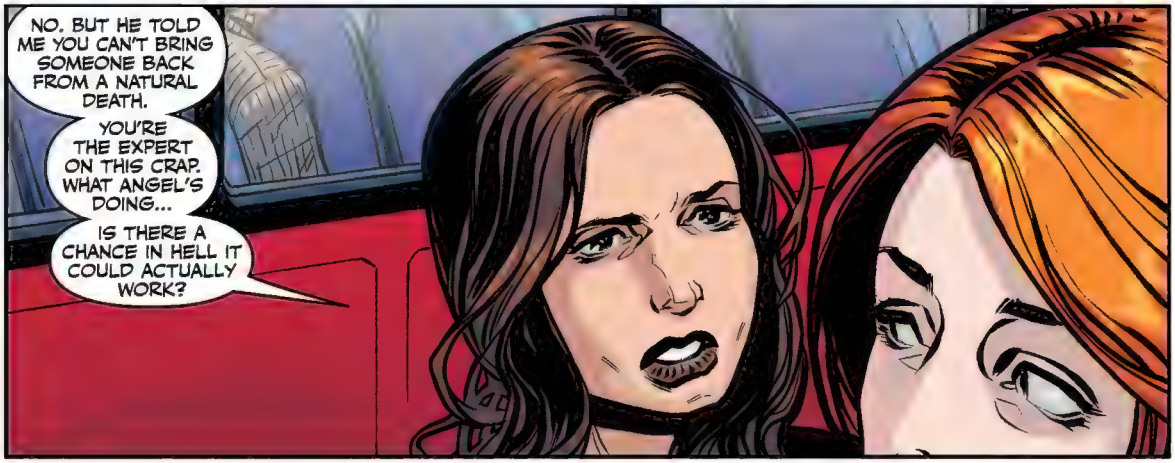

I KNOW. I KNOW.
IT'S GOING TO GET BETTER.
I PROMISE.

MANHATTAN

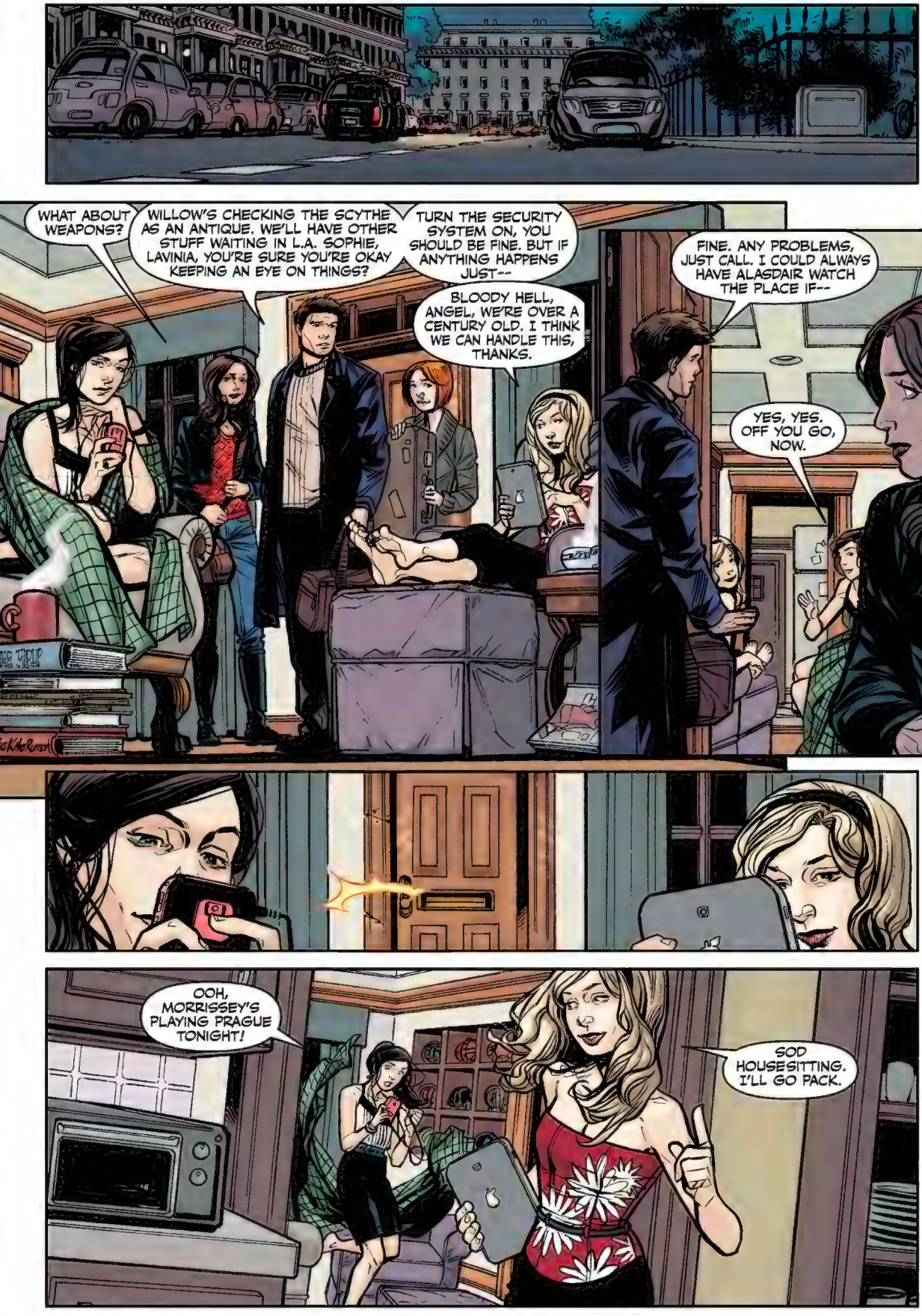
LISTEN, NADIRA, I HAVE TO GO AWAY FOR A WHILE. IT DOESN'T MEAN I'M GIVING UP ON FINDING PEARL AND NASH --
IT'S OKAY. WILLOW SAYS IT'S IMPORTANT, AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW.

I'VE BEEN POKING AROUND. RUMOR IS THEY'RE PLANNING SOMETHING. NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW QUITE WHAT... BUT IT'S BIG.
DON'T EXPECT ME TO STOP SEARCHING WHILE YOU'RE AWAY.
WOULDN'T DREAM OF IT. JUST STICK TO THE "SLAY WITH A BUDDY" PLAN, OKAY? AND KEEP ME IN THE LOOP.

THANKS. THINK YOU CAN TALK HER OUT OF KILLING ANGEL, TOO?
LET'S STICK WITH EASIER STUFF. LIKE RESURRECTIONS AND RESTORING MAGIC.
SHE'S A GOOD KID, BUT SHE'S GOT MORE ISSUES THAN FRIGGIN' *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*.
UH-HUH. DID GILES EVER SAY TO YOU, "I HOPE WHEN YOU GROW UP YOU HAVE A SLAYER WHO ACTS JUST LIKE YOU"?

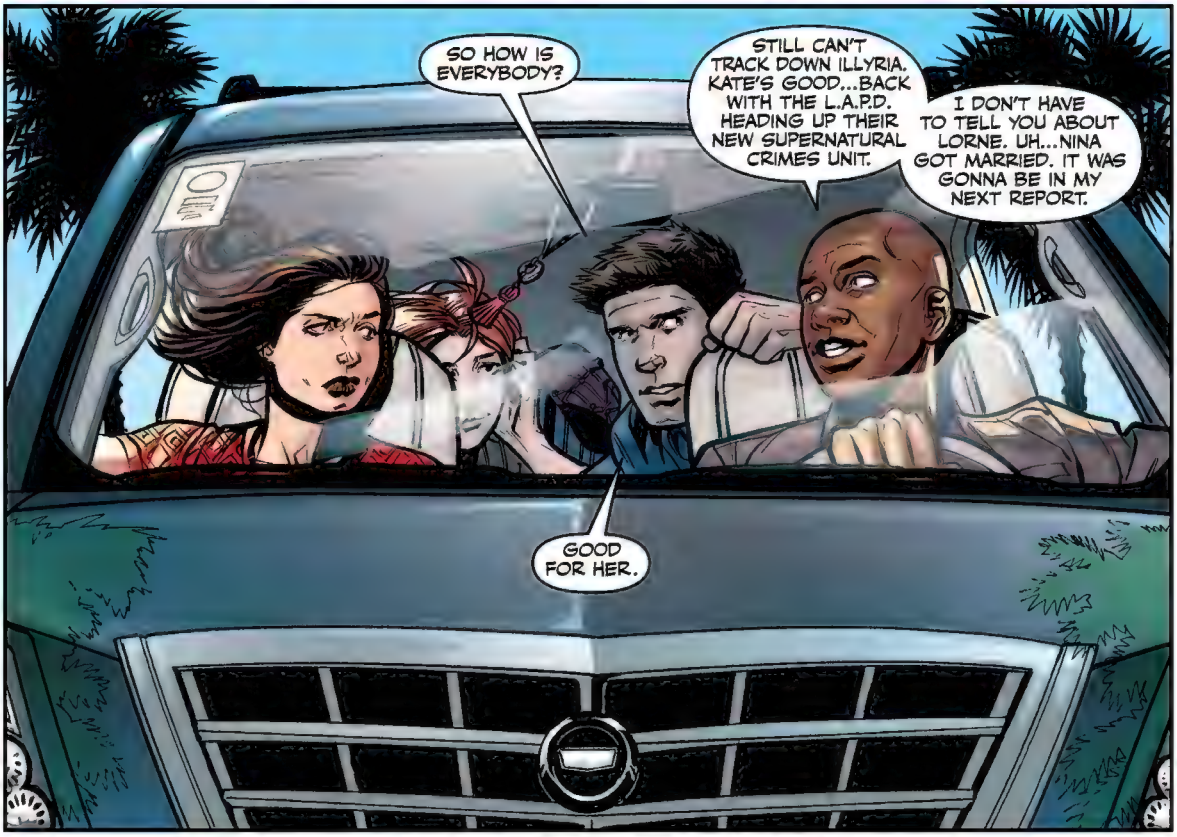

NO. BUT HE TOLD ME YOU CAN'T BRING SOMEONE BACK FROM A NATURAL DEATH.
YOU'RE THE EXPERT ON THIS CRAP. WHAT ANGEL'S DOING...
IS THERE A CHANCE IN HELL IT COULD ACTUALLY WORK?

IF MAGIC STILL EXISTED, I'D SAY MAYBE. ON PAPER, WHAT ANGEL'S DOING MAKES SENSE...IN THEORY. AND ONLY FOR SOMEONE AS IMMERSED IN MAGIC AS GILES.
BUT IT'D BE A LOT MORE LIKELY TO END IN DISASTER. MAGIC ALWAYS HAS A PRICE. THE BIGGER THE RULES YOU'RE TRYING TO BREAK, THE MORE IT COSTS.
WITHOUT MAGIC, HE'LL PROBABLY JUST FAIL. BUT IF THINGS DO START TO LOOK LIKE THEY'RE GOING BAD, I TRUST YOU TO STOP HIM. THAT'S WHY I WENT ALONG WITH THIS.
I LOVE THE WAY EVERYONE DECIDED THAT WAS MY JOB.
NAME SOMEONE ELSE WHO COULD.
OKAY, POINT. NOT A *FAIR* POINT, BUT A POINT.
YOU HAVEN'T SAID IF *YOU* THINK HE CAN DO IT.
I GO BACK AND FORTH. WHAT BUGS ME--BESIDES THE FACT THAT HE KEEPS HIDING THINGS FROM ME LIKE A TEENAGER WITH A PORN COLLECTION--
--IS HE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE IF THE CURE'S WORSE THAN THE DISEASE. WHAT IF WE GET A ZOMBIE? OR WORSE...GILES'S SOUL STUCK IN A ROTTING CORPSE?
WHEN I ASK, HE BLOWS IT OFF. WHICH SAYS TO ME HE'S DOING THIS FOR HIMSELF, NOT GILES.
FAITH, I HAVE A JEWISH MOTHER. WHEN IT COMES TO PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE, YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE.
I KNOW I'M NOT THE POSTER CHILD FOR USING MAGIC RESPONSIBLY. BUT THE TWO SITUATIONS ARE TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
EARTH'S LOST SOMETHING ESSENTIAL. BECAUSE OF WHAT BUFFY AND ANGEL DID. I'M TRYING TO FIX IT. NO MATTER WHAT COMES OF THAT, DOING NOTHING IS WORSE.
WE CAN'T WAIT TILL THINGS GET *REALLY* BAD, BECAUSE THEN IT'LL BE *TOO LATE.*
THIS IS TO HELP THE WORLD. NOT ME.
THEY'RE NOT THE SAME THING AT ALL.


WHAT ABOUT WEAPONS?
WILLOW'S CHECKING THE SCYTHE AS AN ANTIQUE. WE'LL HAVE OTHER STUFF WAITING IN L.A. SOPHIE, LAVINIA, YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE OKAY KEEPING AN EYE ON THINGS?
TURN THE SECURITY SYSTEM ON, YOU SHOULD BE FINE. BUT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS JUST--
BLOODY HELL, ANGEL, WE'RE OVER A CENTURY OLD. I THINK WE CAN HANDLE THIS, THANKS.
FINE. ANY PROBLEMS, JUST CALL. I COULD ALWAYS HAVE ALASDAIR WATCH THE PLACE IF--
YES, YES. OFF YOU GO, NOW.
OOH, MORRISSEY'S PLAYING PRAGUE TONIGHT!
SOD HOUSESITTING. I'LL GO PACK.

LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.
--SO YOU CREATE THIS WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE AND LEAVE EVERYONE ELSE TO DIE. INCLUDING US AND YOUR SON.
NO! WHY DOES EVERYONE HAVE SUCH A HARD TIME GETTING THIS? ONCE WE'D GIVEN THE TWILIGHT UNIVERSE FORM, I WAS GOING TO BRING EVERYONE OVER!
BUFFY NEVER MENTIONED YOU SAYING THAT.
YOU EVER TRY FINISHING A SENTENCE WHEN BUFFY'S WORKED UP?
OH, THAT IS SEXIST. AND FUNNY AND SO VERY, VERY TRUE.
AHEM.
ANYWAY.
WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED.
GUNN!
TAXI STAND
LADIES. YOU LOOK AS LOVELY AS EVER.
ANGEL. YOU LOOK LIKE ED HARDY EXPLODED ON YOU.

IT'S TO KEEP THE SUN OFF. I HAD A TRENCH COAT AND FEDORA, BUT FAITH SAID I LOOKED LIKE A FLASHER.
FROM THE FIFTIES.
MY RIDE HAS TINTED WINDOWS. YOU GOT CHECKED BAGS?
JUST A SCYTHE.


SO HOW IS EVERYBODY?
STILL CAN'T TRACK DOWN ILLYRIA. KATE'S GOOD...BACK WITH THE L.A.P.D. HEADING UP THEIR NEW SUPERNATURAL CRIMES UNIT.
I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT LORNE. UH...NINA GOT MARRIED. IT WAS GONNA BE IN MY NEXT REPORT.
GOOD FOR HER.

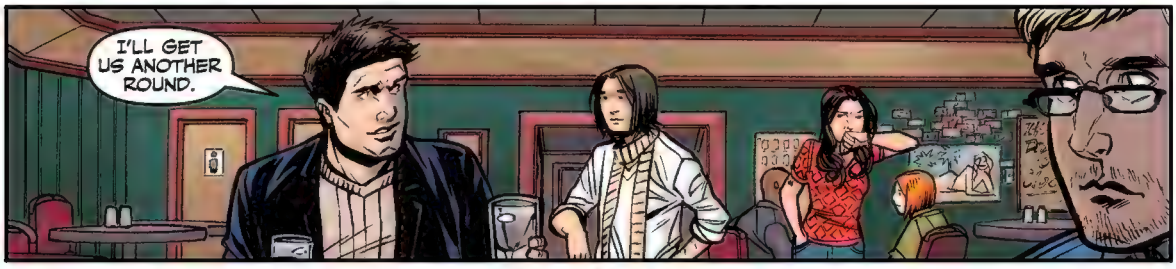
AS FOR THE MAN OF THE HOUR, HIS PSYCH CLASS ENDED ONE MINUTE AGO, WHICH SHOULD PUT HIM RIGHT ABOUT... THERE.

IS... IS THAT HIS GIRLFRIEND?
NATALIE. ALSO MAJORING IN SOCIAL WORK. THEY'VE BEEN TOGETHER THREE MONTHS.
LOOK AT HIM. HE SEEMS SO...
WILLOW...
NO. YOU ARE NOT BACKING OUT ON ME NOW.
HE'S GOT HIS LIFE TOGETHER.
WE FLEW ACROSS AN OCEAN!
HEY, WHERE THE HELL DID HE--
THUD
ARE YOU WEARING A HOODIE?

I CALLED YOU. FOR MONTHS. AND NOTHING. SO FINALLY I FIGURED, OKAY, HE'S GOT STUFF TO DEAL WITH. I'LL GIVE HIM SPACE. AND NOW YOU JUST SHOW UP OUT OF NOWHERE?
I WISH YOU'D MAKE UP YOUR DAMN MIND.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY. I NEVER MEANT TO CONFUSE THINGS.
Hats by Lilly
YOU KNOW IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU, RIGHT? I JUST...LET'S FACE IT, THE BEST THING I CAN DO FOR YOU IS STAY OUT OF YOUR LIFE.
I MEAN, LOOK AT YOU. DOING GREAT IN SCHOOL. NO DEMONS OR BLACK MAGIC OR ELDER GODS. JUST LEARNING HOW TO HELP PEOPLE.
YOU'RE TURNING INTO THIS AMAZING MAN. AND I...
I COULDN'T BE ANY MORE PROUD OF YOU.

SERIOUSLY, WHAT IS IT ABOUT HAVING KIDS THAT MAKES YOU NUTS? I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT--DO *ANY* OF US HAVE PARENTS WHO AREN'T TOTALLY WHACKED?
I FIGURED YOU WERE ON A GUILT TRIP. I MEAN, WHEN ARE YOU NOT, RIGHT? BUT STILL, WHEN YOUR FATHER WON'T TAKE YOUR CALLS, IT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL REJECTED.
I'M SORRY. I WAS PUTTING IT OFF. IT'S NOT A GOOD THING FOR YOU, CONNOR. *I'M* NOT--

I WASN'T FINISHED. YOU WERE *RIGHT.* I'M DOING GREAT HERE. AND NATALIE'S...I KNOW IT'S EARLY, BUT SHE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL.
I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR ME. YOU SHOULD BE WHEREVER'S BEST FOR YOU. I'LL BE FINE WITH IT.
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE FROM ME. NOT NOW...NOT EVER.


I'LL GET US ANOTHER ROUND.

ALL GROWN UP, HUH?
PROBABLY MORE THAN ME.
ALL THIS TIME I'VE SPENT TRYING TO FIND REDEMPTION SAVING THE WORLD...WHEN MAYBE I SHOULD'VE JUST BEEN TRYING TO BE A BETTER MAN.

I GOT A PLACE YOU CAN START.
DON'T TRY TO MAKE UP FOR KILLING GILES BY MAYBE KILLING CONNOR.

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. YOU TOLD ME TO WATCH YOU. LET YOU KNOW IF YOU CROSSED A LINE.
IF YOU'RE GONNA RISK A SON WHO'S ALIVE FOR A GUY WHO'S DEAD--
OF COURSE NOT. I'D ALREADY DECIDED. WE'RE NOT DOING THIS.

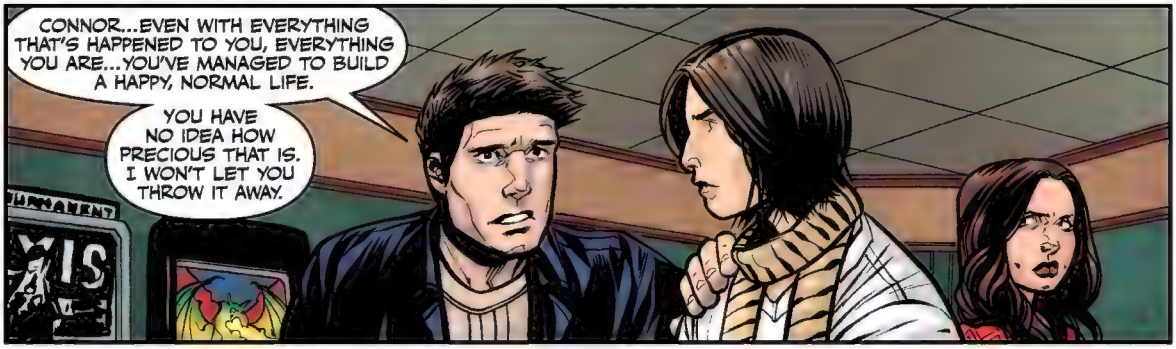
BUT DO ME A FAVOR.
IT WASN'T THAT LONG AGO I HAD TO PULL YOU OFF YOUR FATHER BEFORE YOU CHOKED HIM TO DEATH.

SO KEEP YOUR PARENTING ADVICE TO YOURSELF.

ONE SMITHWICK'S.
WILLOW, I NEED TO TALK TO YOU FOR A MINUTE.

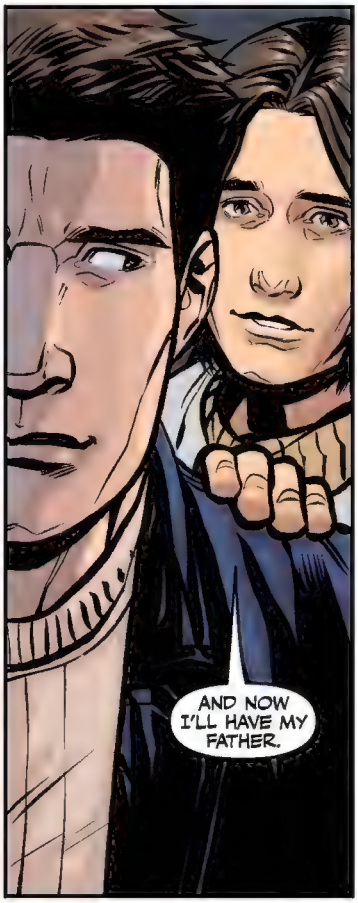
SHE ALREADY TOLD ME ABOUT QUOR'TOTH.
LET'S DO IT.

YOU TOLD HIM?
WE AGREED IT WAS UP TO HIM.
IT'S OKAY. I'M IN.
NO YOU'RE NOT.
SHE SAYS SHE CAN RESTORE MAGIC. THE WORLD NEEDS IT. I'VE SEEN WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE... ON THE STREETS, IN THE PSYCH WARDS. AND IT'S GETTING WORSE.
THE MENTALLY ILL, THE ADDICTS...THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE ARE ALREADY FEELING IT. THEY'RE LOSING HOPE, LOSING SOMETHING CRUCIAL.
AND IT'S SPREADING. IF WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT--
I'M NOT LETTING YOU--
"LETTING" ME?
I'M NOT ASKING PERMISSION.
GUNN. TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM.
I DON'T MESS WITH FAMILY DISPUTES, MAN.
I THINK THAT'D FALL UNDER THE CATEGORY OF "PARENTING ADVICE."


CONNOR...EVEN WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU, EVERYTHING YOU ARE...YOU'VE MANAGED TO BUILD A HAPPY, NORMAL LIFE.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW PRECIOUS THAT IS. I WON'T LET YOU THROW IT AWAY.

YOU CAN'T STOP ME.
I COULD TRY.
YOU'D FAIL.

IT'S JUST...OF ALL THE PLACES, QUOR'TOTH...
I SURVIVED THERE AS A LITTLE KID.
YOU HAD HOLTZ WITH YOU.

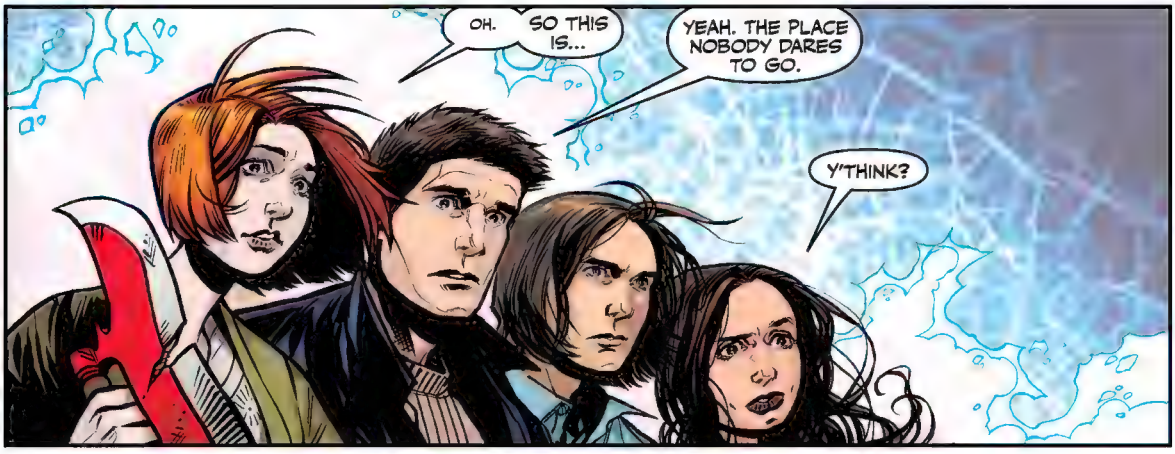

AND NOW I'LL HAVE MY FATHER.

YOU'LL SEE.
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE.

THE HYPERION HOTEL.
AAAAGGH!
HGGH!
CONNOR!!
WHOA THERE. BREAK THE CIRCLE NOW AND WHO KNOWS WHAT HAPPENS.
SHE'S KILLING HIM!

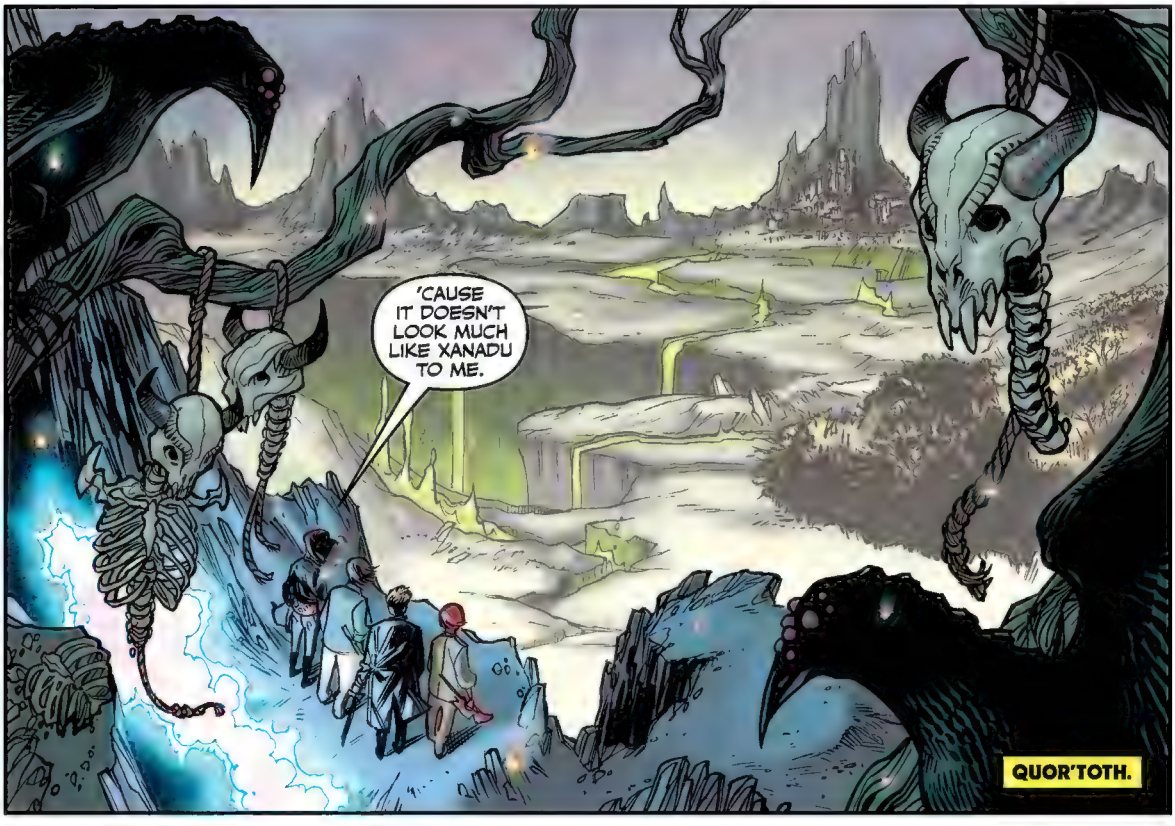
I--I DIDN'T KNOW IT'D BE LIKE--
IT'S ALL RIGHT. THE CUTS HURT, BUT THEY'RE NOT DEEP. AND WE'RE ALMOST DONE, RIGHT?
J-JUST THE FINAL INCANTATION.
THEN LET'S HEAR IT. 'CAUSE THE ONLY WAY I MIGHT DIE TODAY IS OF SUSPENSE.
YOUR FATHER'S RIGHT, CONNOR. YOU'RE A PRETTY AMAZING GUY.
EVERYONE CROSS YOUR FINGERS. THAT'S NOT A MAGIC THING, BUT IT CAN'T HURT. HERE GOES...
N'YAR VRESH QUOR'TOTH!
SHHRRIIPPP
SON OF A--
IT ACTUALLY WORKED.

UM, WE CAN CROSS THE CIRCLE SAFELY NOW. WE HAVE ABOUT THIRTY HOURS UNTIL THE TEAR CLOSES. GUNN, YOU'RE OKAY STANDING GUARD ALONE?
NO SWEAT. AND I KNOW THE REST OF Y'ALL HAVE SUPERPOWERS, BUT IF HALF OF WHAT CONNOR SAYS ABOUT THIS PLACE IS TRUE, YOU'LL NEED WHAT'S IN HERE.
NO GUNS. TECHNOLOGY WON'T WORK THERE.
LET'S NOT HAVE THIS FIGHT AGAIN. I'M GOING WITH YOU.
I KNOW. HERE'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE.
WE GO THROUGH. WE STAND RIGHT NEXT TO THE TEAR UNTIL WILLOW GETS HER POWER BACK. THINGS GO BAD EVEN A LITTLE, WE COME BACK THROUGH AND CLOSE IT.
ANYONE HAS TO STAY BEHIND TO COVER THE RETREAT, IT'S ME. THOSE ARE MY TERMS, AND THEY'RE NON-NEGOTIABLE.
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.
THEN COME ON, SON.
TIME I SAW WHERE YOU GREW UP.



FAMILY REUNION

PART TWO



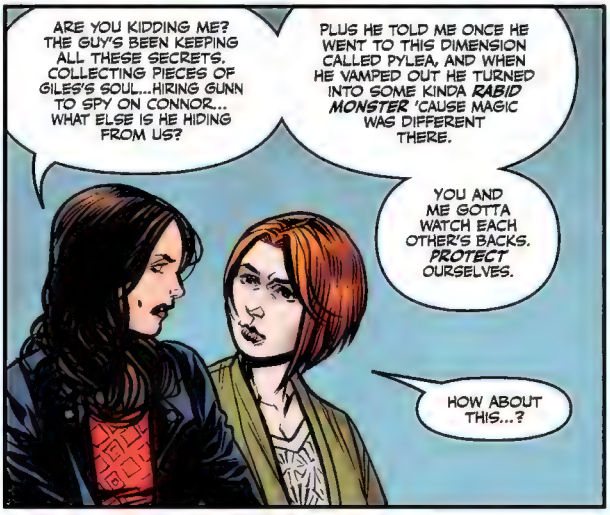
WHEN YOU GREW UP HERE, IT WAS...LIKE THIS?
YEAH.
IT LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME.
HOW DID HOLTZ EVEN SURVIVE?
"HE WAS A PRETTY DETERMINED GUY."
CONNOR, I AM SO--
STOP! IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT! WESLEY STOLE ME. IT WASN'T EVEN HIS FAULT. HE WAS MANIPULATED.
LOOK, I'M FINE. BUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO STAND IT IF YOU--
ANGEL.
IT WORKED.
MY MAGIC'S BACK.

OKAY, GREAT. DO WHAT YOU NEED TO SO THE REST OF US CAN GO HOME.
UM, THAT WAS THE GOOD NEWS. THE BAD NEWS IS THAT MAGIC HERE IS... DIFFERENT THAN ON EARTH. EVEN IF I WASN'T RUSTY, IT'D TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.
YOU NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT "GETTING USED TO"!
I SAID I NEED YOU TO KEEP ME ALIVE WHILE I FIGURE THINGS OUT!
I'LL HAVE TO OPEN ANOTHER RIFT, FOR WHERE I'M GOING. THAT WAS NEVER GOING TO BE A CAKEWALK. I NEED TIME, CONCENTRATION...
GUYS.
BORDER PATROL.
FOOD.

WILLOW, RUN!
NEVER AGAIN.
INFERNARIUM MORTIS!
THAT WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN.
HHRRR--
I'VE GOT THIS.
--RRKK?
NO.
IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S DAMNED, NO!

THE SECOND COMING! THE WRATH OF THE DESTROYER! WOE UPON US ALL!
LOOKS LIKE THEY REMEMBER YOU.
BUT THE WAY TIME MOVES HERE... IT MUST'VE BEEN CENTURIES...
MY EXPERIENCE, A DUDE RUNS OFF SCREAMING, HE COMES BACK WITH COPS. WE SHOULD FIND COVER.
ARE YOU CRAZY? WE CAN'T LEAVE AN OPEN RIFT BETWEEN QUOR'TOTH AND EARTH UNGUARDED. YOU WANT TO KILL GUNN? AND HALF OF L.A.?
GOT IT COVERED.
THERE. NOW NOTHING NATIVE TO QUOR'TOTH CAN PASS THROUGH.
NO OFFENSE, BUT LAST I SAW, YOUR MOJO WASN'T EXACTLY RISIN'.
I'M GETTING THE HANG OF IT. IT WORKED. I CAN FEEL IT.
ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
FWAASSH
PROBLEM SOLVED. WE CAN HIDE IN THE FOREST.

HEY. WILLOW.
NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT SOME MAGIC BACK, I NEED YOU TO HELP ME KEEP AN EYE ON ANGEL.
HOW DO YOU MEAN?


ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THE GUY'S BEEN KEEPING ALL THESE SECRETS. COLLECTING PIECES OF GILES'S SOUL...HIRING GUNN TO SPY ON CONNOR... WHAT ELSE IS HE HIDING FROM US?
PLUS HE TOLD ME ONCE HE WENT TO THIS DIMENSION CALLED PYLEA, AND WHEN HE VAMPED OUT HE TURNED INTO SOME KINDA ***RABID MONSTER*** 'CAUSE MAGIC WAS DIFFERENT THERE.
YOU AND ME GOTTA WATCH EACH OTHER'S BACKS. ***PROTECT*** OURSELVES.
HOW ABOUT THIS...?

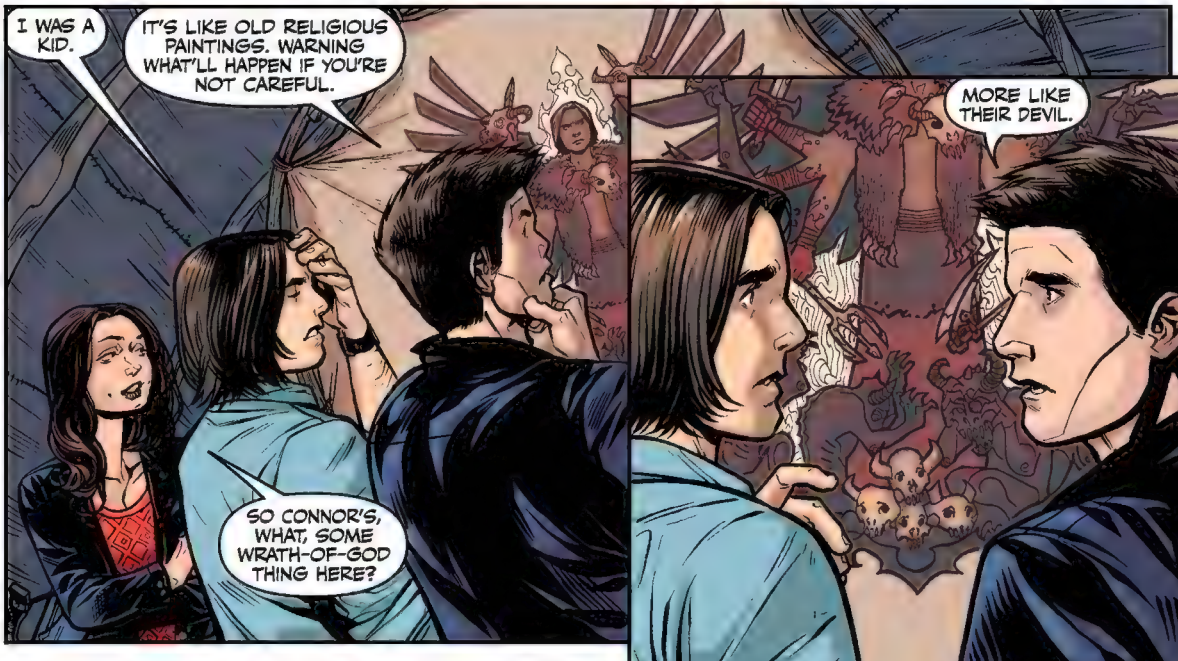
HEY, ANGEL. LET'S HOLD OFF ON THE BUMPY FACE FOR A WHILE, OKAY? NEW DIMENSION, NEW RULES.
COPY THAT. LAST THING I NEED'S A REPEAT OF PYLEA. GOOD THINKING.

I KNOW YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN KINDA BUTTING HEADS LATELY, BUT WHATEVER ELSE MAY'VE HAPPENED, WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO TRUST EACH OTHER IN A FIGHT.
WE LEARNED THAT A LONG TIME AGO, RIGHT?

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. GOOD JOB.
FIVE BY FIVE.

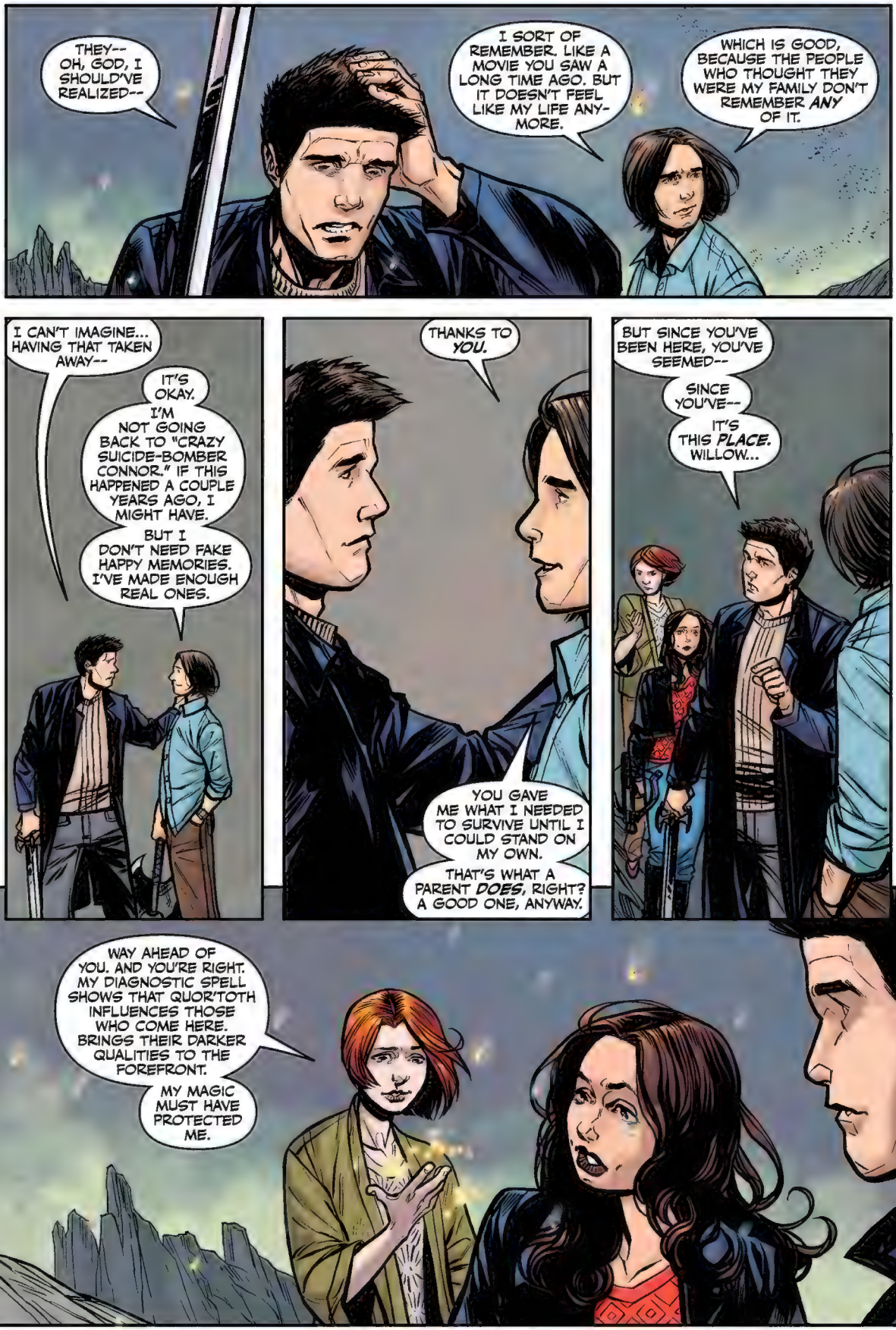
WE CAN HOLE UP HERE. I DON'T SMELL ANYONE INSIDE. NOT FOR A LONG TIME.
SOME OF THE LOCALS LIVE ISOLATED LIKE THIS. FOR SAFETY... THEY STILL HAVE A HIGH MORTALITY RATE...LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN QUOR'TOTH.
WILLOW, DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET US OUT OF HERE.
CONNOR, WHAT'VE YOU GOT?
WELL...

I THINK IT'S ME.
THERE'S A RESEMBLANCE, ALL RIGHT. WHAT'S THAT AROUND YOUR NECK?
I USED TO WEAR THE BODY PARTS OF DEMONS I'D KILLED.


I WAS A KID.
IT'S LIKE OLD RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS. WARNING WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL.
SO CONNOR'S, WHAT, SOME WRATH-OF-GOD THING HERE?
MORE LIKE THEIR DEVIL.

HRAGH!
I THINK I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO WHOEVER LIVED HERE.
TOUGH SON OF A--
MAKE IT REAR UP.
IT'S HEART'S IN ITS STOMACH.
RREEENNK!
SHLKK
NOT SO HARD TO KILL WHEN YOU KNOW HOW.

WE SHOULD MOVE ON.
HOW'D YOU LEARN ABOUT THE CREATURE'S HEART?
DA--I MEAN, HOLTZ FIGURED IT OUT.
HE PROTECTED YOU. I HAVE TO GIVE HIM THAT.
HE NEVER LEFT YOU.
HE LEFT ME ALL THE TIME! IN THE ASH DESERT OR THE BLEEDING FOREST, TO FIND MY WAY BACK! THE GUY...LOOK, HE MIGHT'VE LOVED ME IN HIS OWN TWISTED WAY, BUT HE WAS CRAZY!
I NEVER REALIZED HOW INSANE IT WAS, GROWING UP HERE, UNTIL I GOT TO EARTH. YOU GAVE ME MEMORIES OF A HAPPY CHILDHOOD. SO I WOULDN'T FALL APART.
BUT IT'S ALL FAKE, CONNOR. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO COME BACK HERE. I WAS AFRAID THE GOOD MEMORIES WOULD, I DON'T KNOW, SEEM LESS REAL--
THEY WERE MAGIC.
THEY'RE ALREADY GONE.


THEY-- OH, GOD, I SHOULD'VE REALIZED--
I SORT OF REMEMBER. LIKE A MOVIE YOU SAW A LONG TIME AGO. BUT IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MY LIFE ANYMORE.
WHICH IS GOOD, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE MY FAMILY DON'T REMEMBER *ANY* OF IT.
I CAN'T IMAGINE... HAVING THAT TAKEN AWAY--
IT'S OKAY. I'M NOT GOING BACK TO "CRAZY SUICIDE-BOMBER CONNOR." IF THIS HAPPENED A COUPLE YEARS AGO, I MIGHT HAVE.
BUT I DON'T NEED FAKE HAPPY MEMORIES. I'VE MADE ENOUGH REAL ONES.
THANKS TO *YOU*.
YOU GAVE ME WHAT I NEEDED TO SURVIVE UNTIL I COULD STAND ON MY OWN.
THAT'S WHAT A PARENT *DOES*, RIGHT? A GOOD ONE, ANYWAY.
BUT SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HERE, YOU'VE SEEMED--
SINCE YOU'VE--
IT'S THIS *PLACE*. WILLOW...
WAY AHEAD OF YOU. AND YOU'RE RIGHT. MY DIAGNOSTIC SPELL SHOWS THAT QUOR'TOTH INFLUENCES THOSE WHO COME HERE. BRINGS THEIR DARKER QUALITIES TO THE FOREFRONT.
MY MAGIC MUST HAVE PROTECTED ME.

AND I FIGHT MY DARK SIDE EVERY DAY. FAITH, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE BOTHERED YOU.
MAYBE A LITTLE.
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE, SOON. WILLOW?
I'M CLOSE. FINALLY STARTING TO UNDERSTAND THE ENERGY LATTICES. MAYBE FIVE MINUTES?
WE STILL NEED TO GET UNDER COVER. IN THIS PLACE, FIVE MINUTES IS PLENTY OF TIME TO GET--
--KILLED--
WHOOM
M'RRG DIDN'T LIE! IT'S THE ADVERSARY!
STRIKE, WARRIORS OF QUORTOTH! OUR UNHOLY MISSION IS CLEAR! SLAY THE DESTROYER AND WE WILL SIT AT THE LEFT HAND OF THE OLD ONE FOR ALL ETERNITY!

THEY ARE FLIGHTLESS! STAY ALOFT AND THE DAY IS OURS!
BCHOOOM
DOWN!!
FLIGHTLESS.
NOT HELPLESS.
VLLATT
IMPRESSIVE, WITCH. BUT YOU CANNOT SLAY US ALL.
YOU CAN ONLY DIE.
ON MY ORDER-- FIRE.

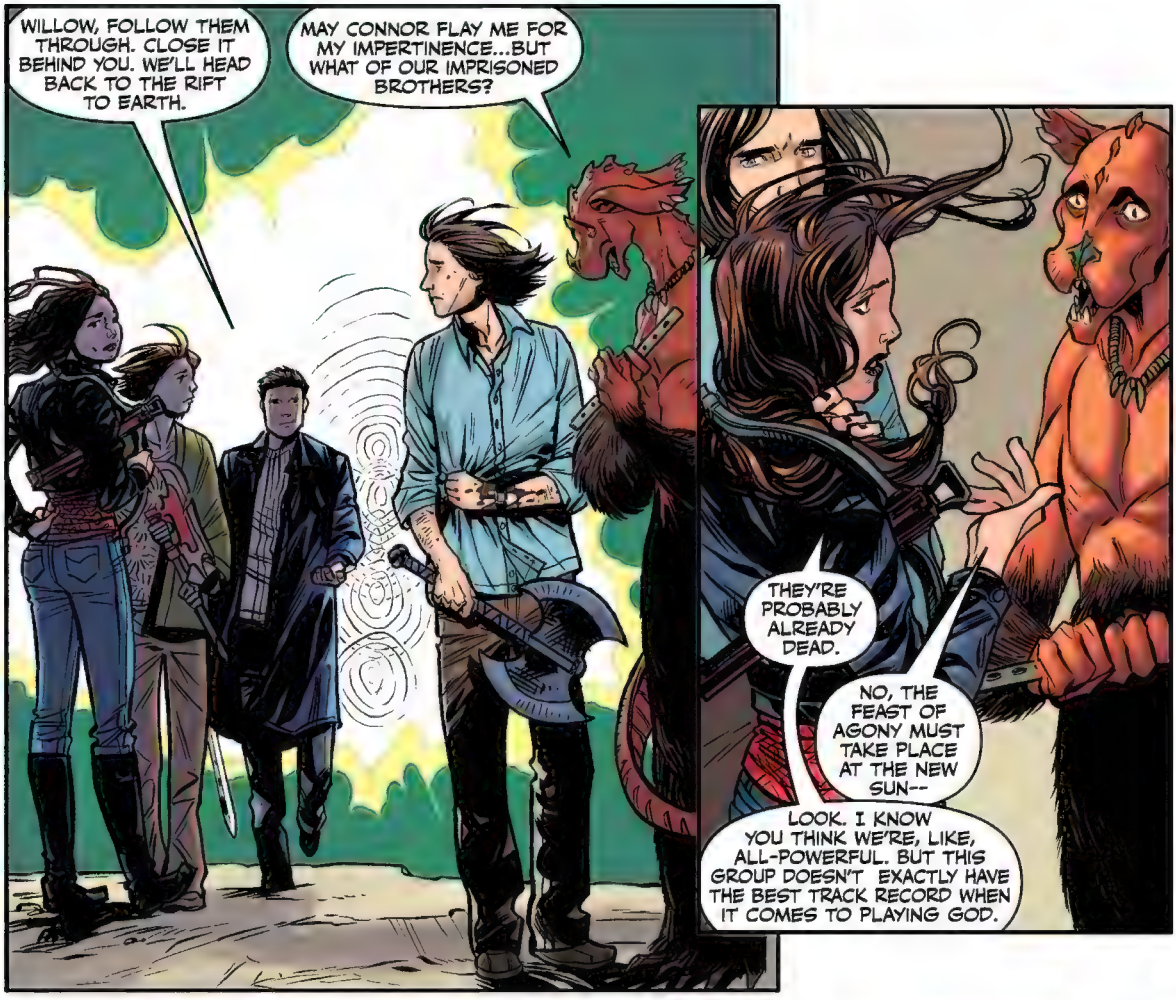
EH?
MmRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
OH, QUOR'TOTH'S BALLS.
SHRAKKABOOOOM

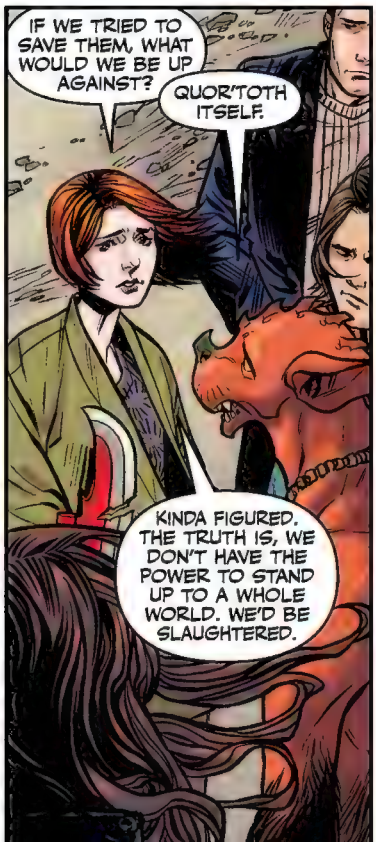
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
THEIR BOMBS...THEY'RE MADE FROM THE FLAME GLANDS OF CRYSTAL DRAGONS. THE RIGHT FREQUENCY CAN MAKE THEM SHATTER... EXPLODE PREMATURELY.
WILLOW, DID YOU--?
NO. IT CAME FROM OVER-- OH.
THE WHISPERS IN TOWN WERE TRUE. IT IS HIM.
THE DESTROYER RETURNED.
HERE WE GO AGAIN...
MASTER.
...OR NOT.

WHAT ARE YOU--? STAND UP!
AS YOU COMMAND, LORD.
STOP CALLING ME THAT. WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?
OF COURSE...OUR INSIGNIFICANT LIVES ARE BENEATH THE DESTROYER'S NOTICE. ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN, WITH APOLOGIES FOR THE PATHETIC NATURE OF--
JUST SAY IT.
YES, MASTER. IN THE CENTURIES SINCE YOUR MAGNIFICENT REIGN OF TERROR, YOU HAVE GAINED FOLLOWERS. CONVERTS TO YOUR WAYS.
MY... WAYS?
"AND LO, AS ALL QUOR'TOTH QUAKED IN FEAR BENEATH THE HEEL OF THE DESTROYER, ONE LOWLY SUPPLICANT SOUGHT TO LEARN THE SOURCE OF HIS UNPARALLELED MIGHT.
"TREMBLING, HE FOLLOWED THE DESTROYER TO A CAMPSITE.
"AS HE WATCHED FROM THE SHADOWS, THE TRUTH WAS REVEALED."
YOU DID WELL TODAY, SON. I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO FIGHT ALONE. I KNOW IT'S HARD. IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE. BUT REMEMBER THIS, AND DRAW STRENGTH FROM IT.
I LOVE YOU. I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.

HALLELUJAH! LOVE! MOST REVILED OF ALL EMOTIONS, PUNISHABLE BY DEATH! THIS IS THE KEY TO THE DESTROYER'S POWER!
IN THE DAYS SINCE, A SMALL BUT DEVOTED FLOCK HAS ARISEN, FOLLOWING YOUR WAYS. PRACTICING LOVE, MERCY, AND COMPASSION. AWAITING YOUR INEVITABLE RETURN TO DELIVER US ALL.
LOOK AT YOU. HIPSTER JESUS.
HOW...HOW MANY? HOW MANY MORE OF YOU?
SINCE YOUR DEPARTURE?
THOUSANDS.
OF COURSE, NEARLY ALL HAVE BEEN SLAIN.
MARTYRS TO YOUR HOLY CAUSE.
YOU DIDN'T KNOW. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
HOW MANY ARE THERE NOW? ALIVE?
PERHAPS TWO SCORE. OF COURSE, MOST OF US WERE CAPTURED YESTERDAY. THEY ARE HELD FOR EXECUTION.
BUT NOW YOU HAVE COME. YOU, WHO VALUES LIFE AS NONE OF QUOR'TOTH DO.
YOU WILL BE THEIR SALVATION.
YOU WILL TAKE US ALL TO A BETTER PLACE.

VVSSHH
YES! SOMEBODY ORDER A TEAR IN REALITY?
GOOD NEWS, EVERYONE...
...WE CAN FINALLY GET OUT OF HERE.
WHERE DOES THIS ONE LEAD?
A QUIET LITTLE AGRARIAN WORLD. NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT IT, EXCEPT THEY DON'T HAVE SHRIMP.
THE MAGIC THERE'S CLOSER TO EARTH TYPE, AND THERE WON'T BE HORDES OF NIGHTMARISH DEMONS TRYING TO KILL ME.
ALL OF YOU--THROUGH HERE. THIS'LL BE YOUR NEW HOME. YOU CAN START OVER. LIVE IN PEACE.
BLESS YOU, FRIEND OF CONNOR!
I'M HIS FATHER.
AH! OF COURSE!
ALL HAIL THE MIGHTY HOLTZ, SIRE OF OUR SAVIOR!


WILLOW, FOLLOW THEM THROUGH. CLOSE IT BEHIND YOU. WE'LL HEAD BACK TO THE RIFT TO EARTH.
MAY CONNOR FLAY ME FOR MY IMPERTINENCE...BUT WHAT OF OUR IMPRISONED BROTHERS?
THEY'RE PROBABLY ALREADY DEAD.
NO, THE FEAST OF AGONY MUST TAKE PLACE AT THE NEW SUN--
LOOK. I KNOW YOU THINK WE'RE, LIKE, ALL-POWERFUL. BUT THIS GROUP DOESN'T EXACTLY HAVE THE BEST TRACK RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO PLAYING GOD.


IF WE TRIED TO SAVE THEM, WHAT WOULD WE BE UP AGAINST?
QUOR'TOTH ITSELF.
KINDA FIGURED. THE TRUTH IS, WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO STAND UP TO A WHOLE WORLD. WE'D BE SLAUGHTERED.

SHE'S RIGHT. I'M SORRY.
WILLOW, TAKE HIM WITH YOU. THE REST OF YOU, LET'S GO...I WANT TO GET BACK BEFORE WE LOSE THE LIGHT.

YOU GO.
I'M STAYING.

CONNOR, YOU GOT THE ONES WHO SAVED US OUT. THERE'S NO TIME TO GO AFTER THE REST. IT'S SUICIDE.
HE'S RIGHT. THERE'S WAY TOO MUCH AT STAKE. OUR ENTIRE WORLD'S GOING TO ROT FROM WITHIN IF WE CAN'T BRING MAGIC BACK.
YOU WERE JUST A KID TRYING TO SURVIVE. MAKE THE ONLY FATHER YOU EVER KNEW HAPPY. YOU'RE NOT ON THE HOOK FOR THIS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I DIDN'T MEAN TO INSPIRE THEM.
BUT I DID.
THE REST OF YOU GO AHEAD.
I'LL BE FINE. I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
AND I WOULD'VE GIVEN ANYTHING TO BE WITH YOU.
IF YOU'RE STAYING, SO AM I.
OKAY.
LET'S STAGE THE GREAT ESCAPE FROM HELL.

FORMER RESIDENCE OF RUPERT GILES. CURRENT HOME OF FAITH LEHANE.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW, LAVINIA, I'M UNBEARABLY CROSS WITH YOU.
I'VE WANTED TO SHAG MORRISSEY FOR THIRTY BLOODY YEARS, AND WHEN I FINALLY GET MY CHANCE, YOU HAVE TO RUIN IT.
OF COURSE I DID. "OUT OF MY WAY, YOU VAPID SLAG" IS A CLEAR INVITATION TO COITAL CONGRESS.
BUT WE DID PROMISE TO LOOK AFTER THE HOUSE, DIDN'T WE?
THAT'S ODD, I COULD HAVE SWORN I LOCKED THE DOOR--

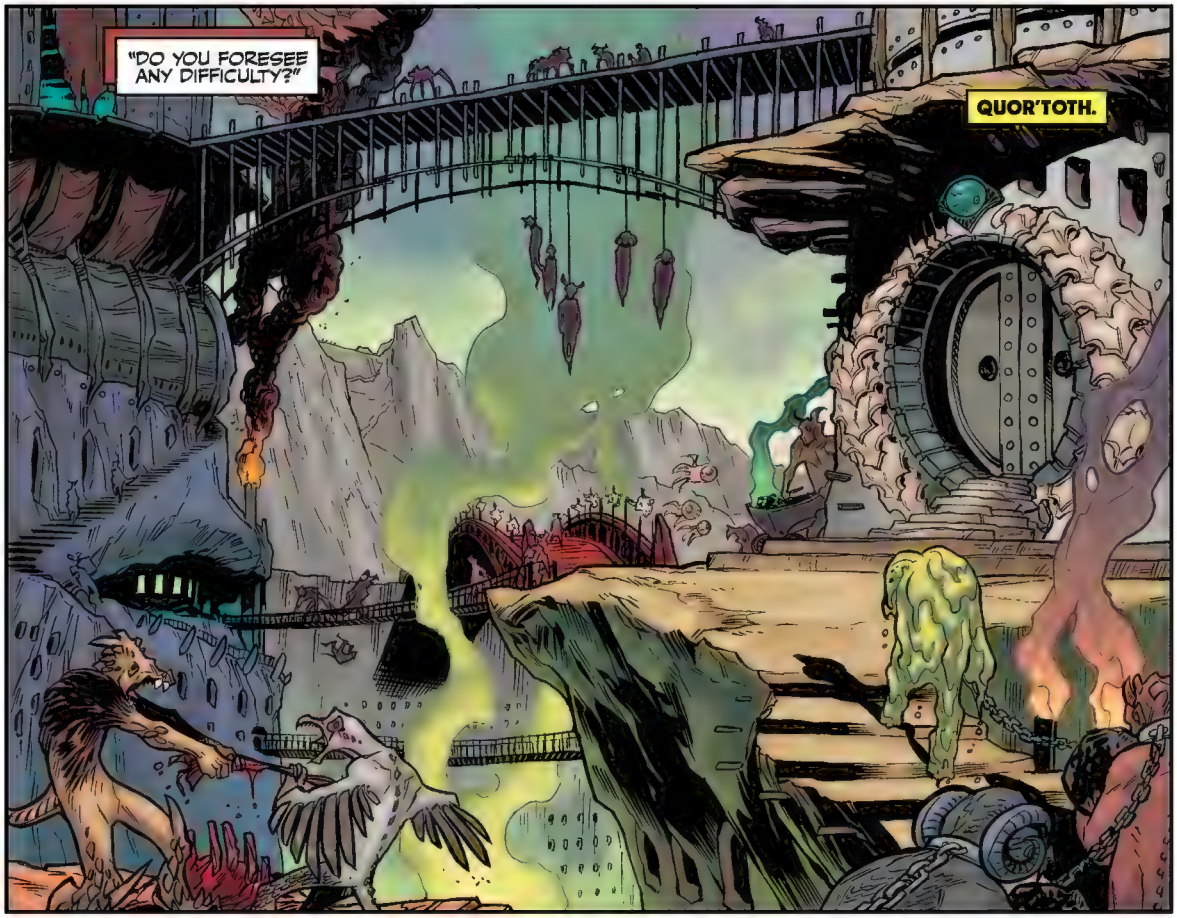
OH, BOTHER.

WE'VE BEEN ROBBED.
WELL, TECHNICALLY, FAITH AND ANGEL HAVE BEEN ROBBED.
NO, SOPHIE, WE'VE BEEN ROBBED. OUR FAMILY.
LOOK AT THIS! ALL OF RUPERT'S MAGICAL ITEMS, GONE!
THAT SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE. EVEN WITH MAGIC REMOVED FROM THE WORLD, THOSE ARTIFACTS HELD ENOUGH RESIDUAL ENERGY TO TURN A THIEF INTO A TOAD.
UNLESS SAID THIEF WAS VERSED IN THE ARTS.
WELL, THEN, THERE'S THE SECURITY SYSTEM.
YOU DIDN'T BLOODY TURN IT ON?
I TOLD YOU TO TURN IT ON!
LADIES. PLEASE.

IT'S NOT LIKE IT WOULD'VE MADE A DIFFERENCE.
OH...
...BUGGERATION.

FAMILY REUNION

PART THREE



OKAY. WE CAN DO THIS.
THE PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH DEMONS, BUT THEY'RE NOT SPECIFICALLY GUARDING THE PRISON. OBVIOUSLY THEY DON'T GET A LOT OF BREAKOUTS.
WE GET AS FAR AS WE CAN WITHOUT BEING SEEN. ONCE OUR COVER'S BLOWN, WE STRIKE HARD, STRIKE FAST, GET OUT.
LET'S GO.
HE'S CRAZY.
HE'S GOT US FIGHTING A WHOLE DIMENSION. TO SAVE DEMONS. WHO ARE PROBABLY ALREADY DEAD.
THAT'S ALL HE DOES. DRAG ME INTO CRAP. MESS UP MY LIFE.
AND NOW HE'S GOING TO GET ME KILLED.
UNLESS I KILL HIM FIRST.
CUT OFF HIS HEAD. KNOCK OUT CONNOR. RUN FOR THE RIFT BACK TO EARTH.
I COULD DO THAT BEFORE ANYONE KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING. I COULD--

NO.
WE HAD THE CHANCE TO LEAVE. I CHOSE TO STAY.
IT'S THIS PLACE. QUOR'TOTH GETS IN YOUR HEAD. ANGEL SAID SO.
UNLESS HE WAS LYING...
NO!
HOLD IT TOGETHER. IGNORE THE CRAZY VOICE. THAT'S NOT YOU ANYMORE.
JESUS, THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE HIM.
THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR HIM ALL THE TIME...
FAITH? YOU OKAY?
FIVE BY FIVE.
LET'S MOVE.

WE'RE SPOTTED! WEAPONS READY!
LOOK OUT!
GET BACK. YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE!
MY PLACE IS AT YOUR SIDE, MY LORD. THERE IS NO GREATER HONOR THAN TO DIE IN YOUR NAME!
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
I INSPIRED THEM TO PRACTICE LOVE, MERCY, AND COMPASSION IN A WORLD WHERE THEY'RE PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.
THE WAY TIME PASSES HERE, IT'S BEEN CENTURIES.
HOW MANY DIED BECAUSE OF ME? THOUSANDS? HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS?
NO. DON'T GO THERE. FIGHT. OR LIE DOWN AND DON'T GET BACK UP.

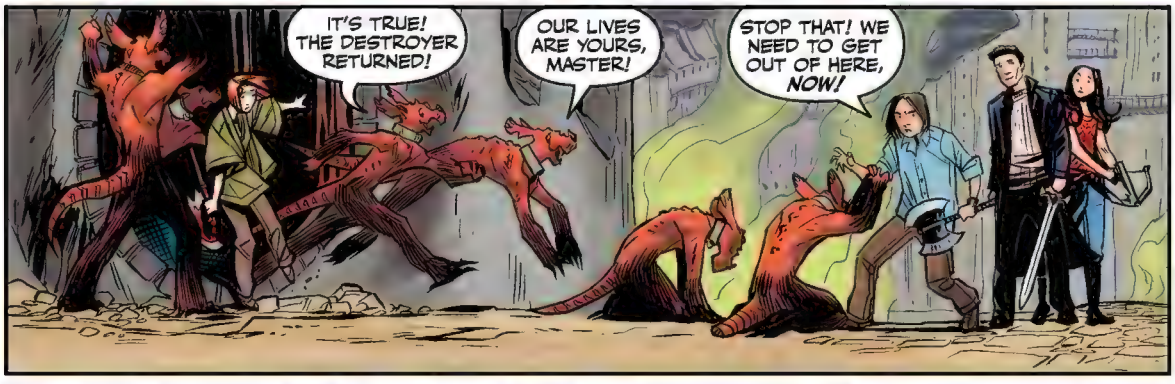
NO WONDER ANGEL RUNS. NO WONDER HE ISOLATES HIMSELF.
NO WONDER HE GRABS FOR THE SLIMMEST HOPES. GRAND GESTURES THAT'LL NEVER WORK. HOPING TO FIX EVERYTHING.
I WISH HE COULD FORGET IT ALL. JUST LET IT GO.
AS IF I EVER COULD.

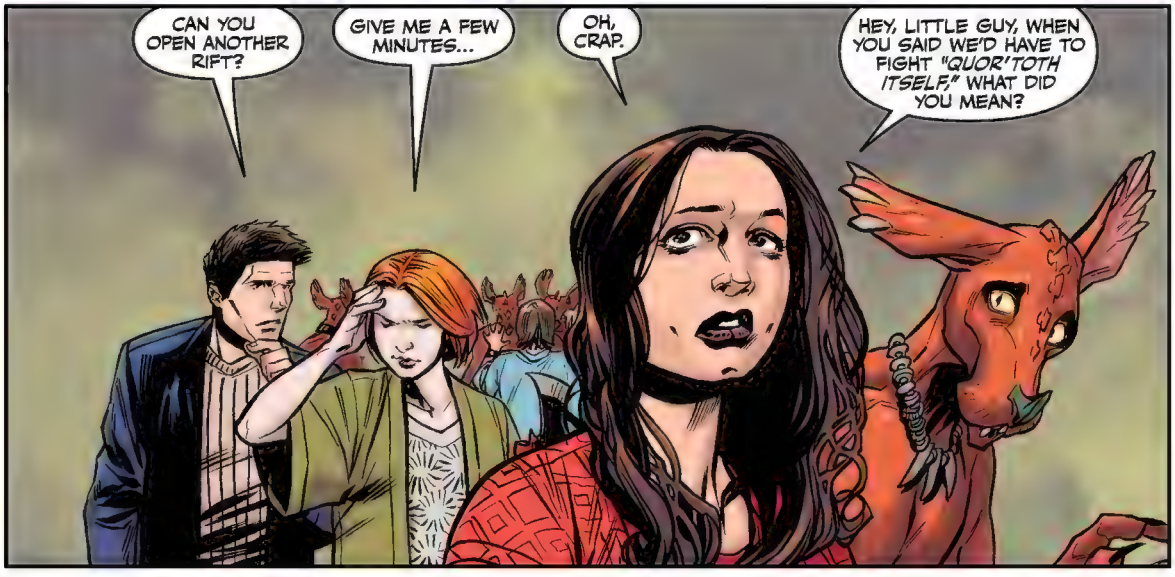
FLEE! THE DESTROYER RETURNS! AND HIS MAD FATHER WITH HIM!
QUITE A REP YOU'VE GOT.
NOT ME. THEY THINK I'M HOLTZ. THE MAN WHO STOLE CONNOR FROM ME AND BROUGHT HIM HERE.
GUY MUST'VE BEEN A GLUTTON FOR PUNISHMENT.
JUST OBSESSED WITH MAKING ME PAY FOR KILLING HIS FAMILY.
WELL, IF OBSESSION WAS HIS THING, I CAN SEE THE RESEMBLANCE.
SORRY. THIS PLACE MAKES ME BITCHY.
FAIR POINT, THOUGH. WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING...
...I CAN IMAGINE HOW IT LOOKS.

Y'KNOW WHAT? NO.
I MEAN, YEAH, YOU'RE KINDA OBSESSED. ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.
BUT YOU WERE READY TO CHUCK YOUR WHOLE QUEST FOR YOUR KID.
AND YOU'VE GONE MONTHS WITHOUT TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD. YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO SAVE ONE GUY. I MEAN, SURE, HE'S *DEAD*, BUT...THAT'S KINDA PROGRESS, RIGHT?
FAITH. TRUST ME. PEP TALKS AREN'T YOUR THING.
HELP ME KILL THE OTHER ONE.
CONNOR, WILLOW--BREAK INTO THE PRISON. WE'VE GOT THIS.
OKAY, I'M NOT THE CHICK FOR HALFTIME SPEECHES. BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS.
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE HOLTZ WAS ABOUT REVENGE. YOU'RE ABOUT REDEMPTION.
AND I'D SELL MY SOUL TO HAVE MY DAD LOVE ME LIKE YOU LOVE CONNOR.

FAITH... WHAT I SAID IN L.A....
FORGET IT. WE'VE BEEN SNIPING AT EACH OTHER A LOT LATELY. STRESSFUL TIMES.

AND DON'T GET TOO HIGH ON YOURSELF. YOU'RE STILL CRAZY AS A BAG OF BADGERS.
ALMOST GOT IT OPEN...


IT'S TRUE! THE DESTROYER RETURNED!
OUR LIVES ARE YOURS, MASTER!
STOP THAT! WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!

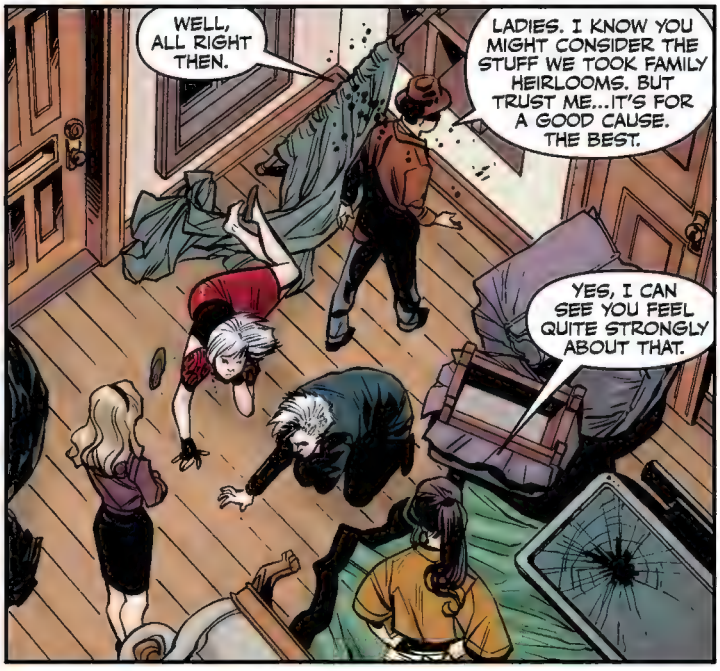

CAN YOU OPEN ANOTHER RIFT?
GIVE ME A FEW MINUTES...
OH, CRAP.
HEY, LITTLE GUY, WHEN YOU SAID WE'D HAVE TO FIGHT "QUOR'TOTH ITSELF," WHAT DID YOU MEAN?

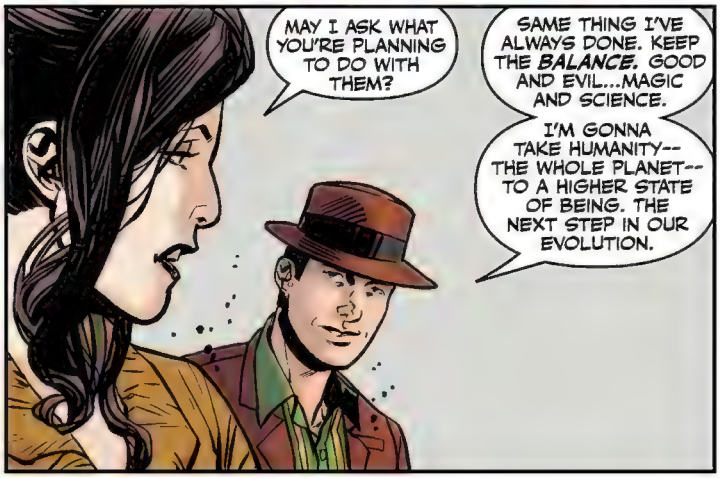
THE OLD ONE WHO GIVES THIS WORLD ITS NAME. WHY?
I KINDA THOUGHT IT WAS A METAPHOR.
WHAT IS A METAPHOR?
NEVER MIND.

HOME OF THE LATE RUPERT GILES.
NASH. PEARL. I CAN STILL SEE STRAIGHT UP YOUR NOSES. THEY DO WONDERS WITH RHINOPLASTY THESE DAYS, YOU KNOW.
SOPHRONIA AND LAVINIA FAIRWEATHER. I BELIEVE I STILL OWE YOU AGONIZING DEATHS.
YES, WELL, AS ATTRACTIVE A PROPOSITION AS IT WAS TO BE YOUR SISTER-WIVES, THERE WAS A SALE AT HARRODS WE SIMPLY COULDN'T MISS.
YOU ABSCONDED WITH THE RINGS OF NARCISSUS.
ETIQUETTE ON RETURNING RINGS AFTER A BROKEN ENGAGEMENT IS A BIT OF A GRAY AREA.
YOU ARE GOING TO BE A BIT OF A GRAY AREA.
ON THE WALL.

HOLD UP. THESE LOVELY LADIES AREN'T GOING TO GIVE US ANY TROUBLE. BESIDES, I'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET A MESSAGE TO ANGEL, AND THEY CAN DELIVER IT.
THEIR CORPSES CAN DELIVER IT. NOW TAKE YOUR HAND OFF ME BEFORE I BURN IT TO A STUMP.
WHAT DID YOU SAY TO ME?
I'M GONNA POP YOUR HEADS LIKE ZITS, YOU LITTLE MAGGOTS.

I'M TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD. THE FUTURE!
AND YOU WASTE MY TIME WITH SCHOOLYARD CRAP?
E-EASY, WHISTLER. WE'RE S-SORRY.


WELL, ALL RIGHT THEN.
LADIES. I KNOW YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THE STUFF WE TOOK FAMILY HEIRLOOMS. BUT TRUST ME...IT'S FOR A GOOD CAUSE. THE BEST.
YES, I CAN SEE YOU FEEL QUITE STRONGLY ABOUT THAT.

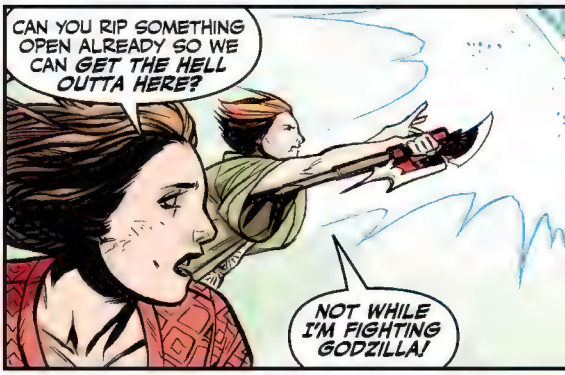

MAY I ASK WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING TO DO WITH THEM?
SAME THING I'VE ALWAYS DONE. KEEP THE BALANCE. GOOD AND EVIL...MAGIC AND SCIENCE.
I'M GONNA TAKE HUMANITY--THE WHOLE PLANET--TO A HIGHER STATE OF BEING. THE NEXT STEP IN OUR EVOLUTION.

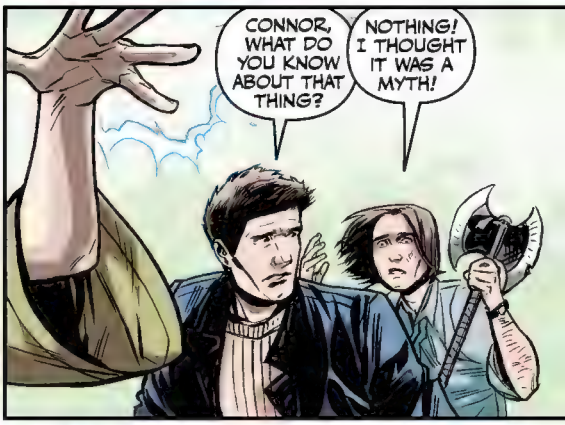
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WERE TRYING TO DO WHEN YOU RUINED MAGIC AND MADE A DOG'S BREAKFAST OF EVERYTHING?

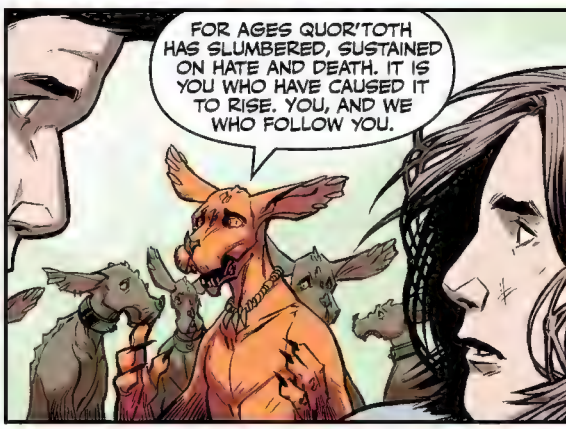
I LIKE YOU, KID. YOU'VE GOT MOXIE.
TWO DIFFERENCES. BEFORE, IT WAS ABOUT GETTING BETTER. NOW IT'S *LIFE OR DEATH.*
AND LAST TIME ANGEL WENT OFF BOOK. THIS TIME *I'M* DRIVING THE BUS. NOT THE WAY I USUALLY LIKE TO DO THINGS, BUT DESPERATE TIMES, RIGHT?
SO NO MORE SITTIN' ON THE SIDELINES FOR ME. AND THESE DAYS, WHEN I ASK PEOPLE TO DO STUFF, I *AIN'T ASKIN'.*
PICK UP THE SWAG BAGS, YOU TWO. WE GOT PLACES TO BE.
SPEAKING OF OUR FAVORITE BALL OF ANGST, TELL HIM WE NEED TO TALK.
I'LL BE AT THIS ADDRESS. ON OUR ANNIVERSARY.
CIAO.
"OUR ANNIVERSARY."
THAT'S WHY ANGEL HASN'T HIT ON ME.

QUOR'TOTH.
WHO
DISRUPTS
MY
FEAST
CONNOR--
I LOVE YOU TOO, DAD.
DID YOU JUST CALL ME--
KRKRKRRZZZ

CHHSHHASHHH
DOWN!!


CAN YOU RIP SOMETHING OPEN ALREADY SO WE CAN GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE?
NOT WHILE I'M FIGHTING GODZILLA!


CONNOR, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT THING?
NOTHING! I THOUGHT IT WAS A MYTH!


FOR AGES QUOR'TOTH HAS SLUMBERED, SUSTAINED ON HATE AND DEATH. IT IS YOU WHO HAVE CAUSED IT TO RISE. YOU, AND WE WHO FOLLOW YOU.

YOUR COMPASSION... YOUR LOVE... ARE AS KNIVES IN ITS BELLY. IT HAS TRIED TO CORRUPT YOU. IT HAS FAILED.
INSTEAD IT WILL END US ALL.

OKAY. IF WE'RE HURTING IT AT ALL, THAT'S GOOD.
WILLOW, TAKE STRENGTH FROM US. WHATEVER YOU NEED.
ANGEL, WE'RE LIKE A MILD CASE OF FOOD POISONING TO THAT THING. WARM, FUZZY FEELINGS AREN'T GOING TO LET US BEAT AN OLD ONE.
WE DON'T HAVE TO. WE JUST NEED TO GET AWAY.
WILLOW...YOU BROUGHT US HERE TO PROTECT YOU. BUT THIS IS ON YOU.
YOU CAME HERE TO GET POWER. YOU HAVE IT. NOW *USE* IT.
YOU HAVE *US*. YOU HAVE THE *SCYTHE*... FULLY RECHARGED, NOW THAT WE'RE IN A WORLD OF MAGIC AGAIN.
BEAT THE MONSTER BACK. BUY US TIME TO RUN FOR THE RIFT TO EARTH. YOU CAN *DO* THIS.
NNNGGHH...
I-I CAN'T...
I *AM!* IT'S *NOT WORKING!*
THINK ABOUT WHAT'S AT STAKE!
THEN THINK ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE *POWERLESS*. HOW MUCH YOU *HATE IT*.
AND ASK YOURSELF HOW THAT'S ANY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU ARE *RIGHT NOW*.

HNNNAAAAGGHH!
BRKRKOOOOOM
PAIN
ALIEN
WRONG

KILL

KILL EVERYTHING

WHAT'S BETTER--OPEN A NEW RIFT, OR GO FOR THE ONE THAT LEADS TO EARTH?

OPENING A RIFT MEANS STANDING STILL. STANDING STILL MEANS GETTING *KILLED.*

THEN WE *RUN.* FAITH, HOW'S OUR LEAD?

NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

THERE IT IS!
WILLOW, CANCEL THE PROTECTION SPELL YOU PUT ON IT. WE ALL NEED TO GO THROUGH.
ALREADY DONE...BUT THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.

IF I GO TO EARTH I'M RIGHT BACK WHERE I STARTED! POWERLESS IN A WORLD WITH NO MAGIC!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID THERE'S NO TIME TO OPEN A NEW RIFT.
I CAN'T HAVE DONE ALL THIS FOR NOTHING!
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS LATER? WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF--

DEATH

ALL DEATH
ALL DARK
ALL MINE

WILLOW, WE MAY NEED YOU TO HOLD IT OFF. ARE YOU UP TO IT?

WILLOW?
ARE YOU OKAY?

GUYS...
...WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

FAMILY REUNION

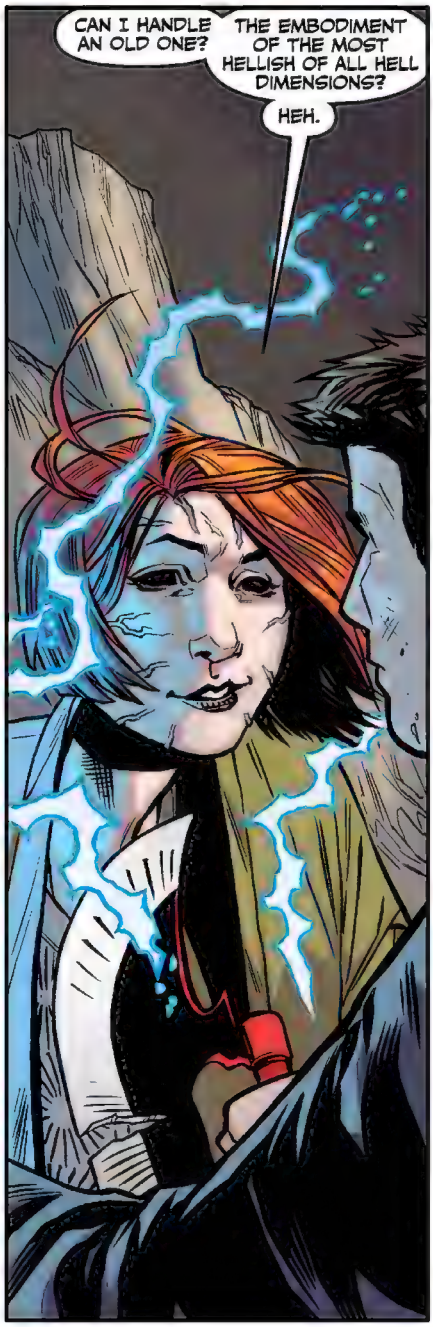
PART FOUR

I WAS WRONG. THIS PLACE... ITS EVIL...IT IS AFFECTING ME.
FORGET WHAT I SAID. I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE. WE CAN TRY AGAIN LATER-- I'LL BE READY NEXT TIME--I JUST CAN'T BE LIKE THIS!
YOU HEARD HER! CLEAR A PATH TO THE RIFT! LET HER GO BACK TO EARTH!
MOVE, VERMIN! THE FRIENDS OF LORD CONNOR MUST PASS BEFORE YOU!
I AM SORRY, GREAT DESTROYER. MY PEOPLE ARE SLOW AND STUPID. PLEASE EXTERMINATE ANY WHO BAR THE WAY.
NO ONE'S GETTING EXTERMINATED! WILLOW JUST NEEDS TO JUMP THE LINE!
THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH THAT.
IF WILLOW'S NOT HERE...

...WHO PROTECTS US FROM THAT?
SUCK
OUT
YOUR
SOULS

ANGEL, I CAN'T! PLEASE, I CAN'T FIGHT, NOT NOW...
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
NO! YOU DON'T KNOW ME LIKE THIS! IT'S NEVER OKAY!
WILLOW...IT WILL BE. I PROMISE YOU.
I NEED YOU TO TRUST ME.
I KNOW THAT'S HARD. AFTER TWILIGHT... AFTER EVERYTHING. BUT PLEASE, WILLOW.
CAN YOU TRUST ME?
I... I...
YES.
BUT I DON'T TRUST ME.

LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT.
WE NEED TIME TO GET EVERYONE THROUGH. MAYBE A MINUTE.
WILLOW... CAN YOU HANDLE QUOR'TOTH?


CAN I HANDLE AN OLD ONE?
THE EMBODIMENT OF THE MOST HELLISH OF ALL HELL DIMENSIONS?
HEH.

HERE'S A BETTER QUESTION, ANGEL.

CAN IT HANDLE ME?

SHHRAKKAVRAASSHH

HATE

KILL

ERASE

THIS IS *BAD.* SHE'S STARTING TO LIKE IT.

WHEN I GET CRAZY, I START FIGHTS WITH BIKERS AND NAIL XANDER. IF *SHE* LOSES CONTROL, SHE COULD *WIPE OUT A WORLD.*

WHAT'S THE PLAY? *LEAVE* HER HERE? 'CAUSE PUTTING ASIDE THE FACT THAT IT'S A SCUMBAG MOVE, I DOUBT THERE'S ANYWHERE WE CAN GO SHE CAN'T FOLLOW.

NO ONE'S LEAVING ANYONE.

CONNOR, YOU LEAD THE CIVILIANS THROUGH--SO GUNN KNOWS THEY'RE FRIENDS.

WE JUST NEED TO HOLD IT TOGETHER FOR A MINUTE...

UH-UH. CHANGE OF PLANS.

BONK

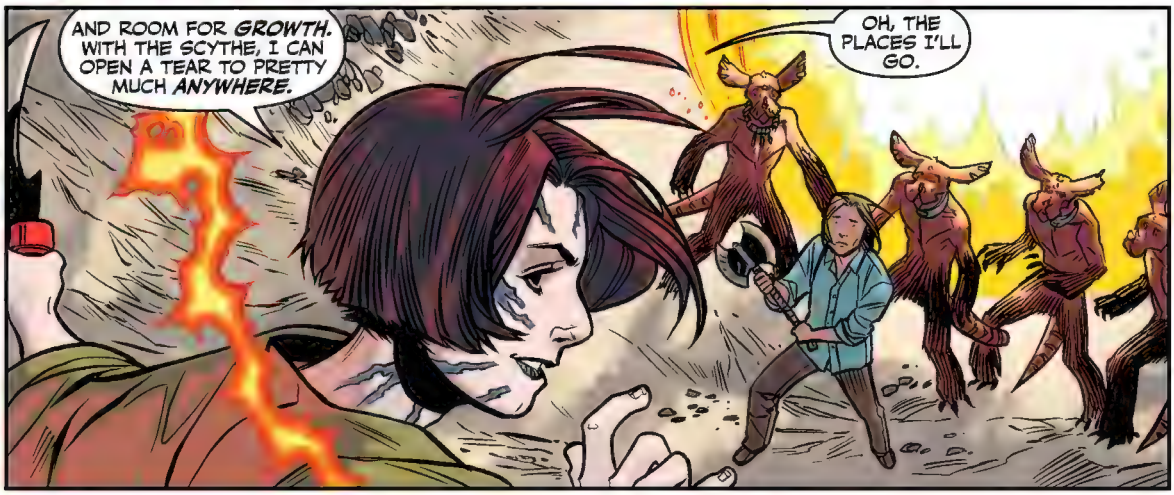
I'M CALLING THE SHOTS NOW.

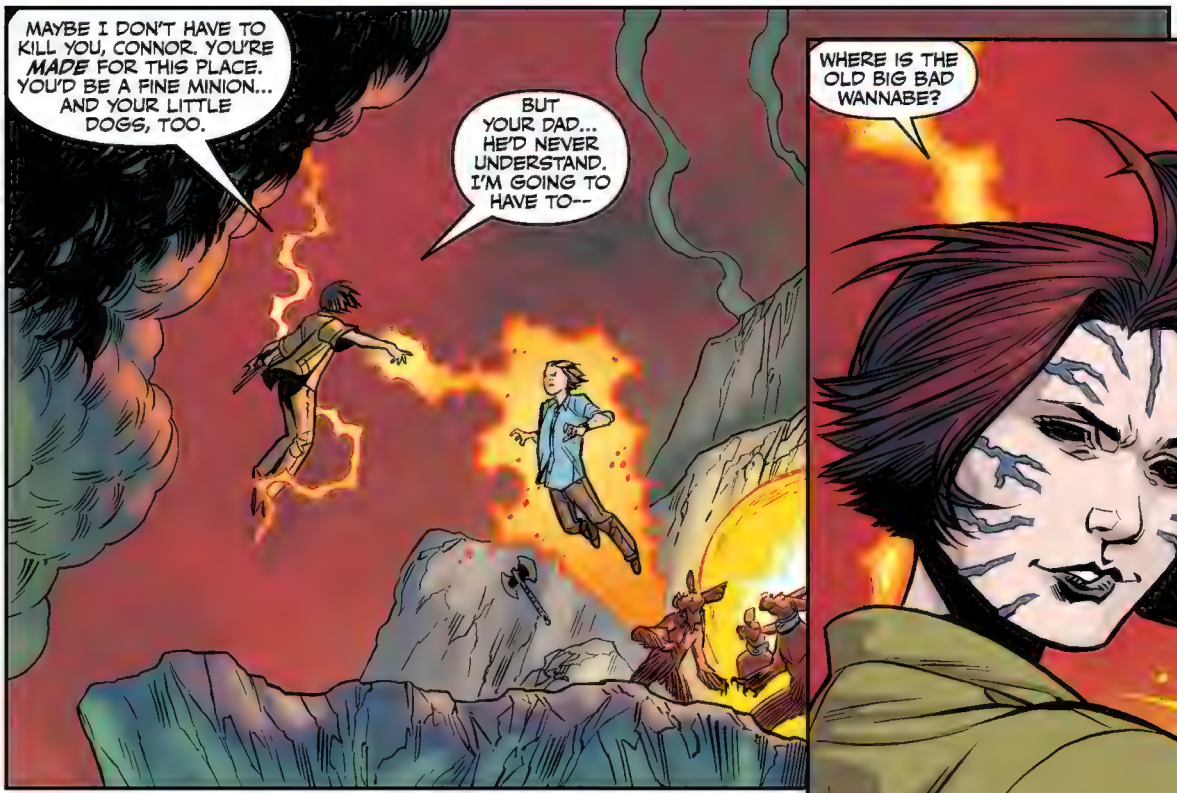
WHAT WAS I AFRAID OF?
THE POWER HERE RUNS DEEP. AND HOT.
I CAN DO ANYTHING.
RRRNNCHH
QUOR'TOTH NEEDS A NEW GOD. ONE WITH A LITTLE MORE VISION...

...AND TALENT.
KRAKATOOM

I LIKE IT HERE.

A GIRL COULD BUILD A *FUTURE* IN THIS PLACE.
RICH VEINS OF POWER...PLENTY OF WORSHIPERS...


AND ROOM FOR *GROWTH.* WITH THE SCYTHE, I CAN OPEN A TEAR TO PRETTY MUCH *ANYWHERE.*
OH, THE PLACES I'LL GO.

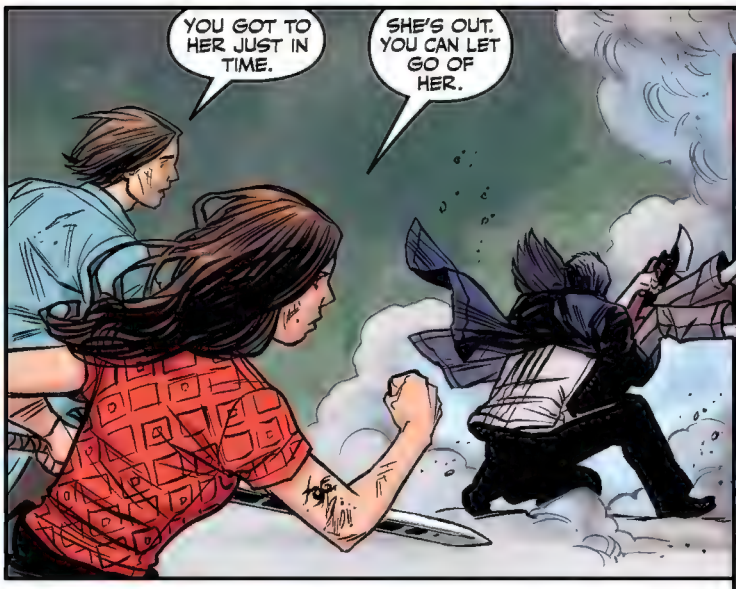

MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO KILL YOU, CONNOR. YOU'RE *MADE* FOR THIS PLACE. YOU'D BE A FINE MINION... AND YOUR LITTLE DOGS, TOO.
BUT YOUR DAD... HE'D NEVER UNDERSTAND. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO--
WHERE IS THE OLD BIG BAD WANNABE?

HEY--WHAT IF THE RULES ARE DIFFERENT HERE? WHAT IF YOU LOSE CONTROL?
THEN WE'RE ALL DEAD. READY...
NOW!
WH--
AAAA!

BASTARD! I'LL BURN YOU TO ASH! I'LL--

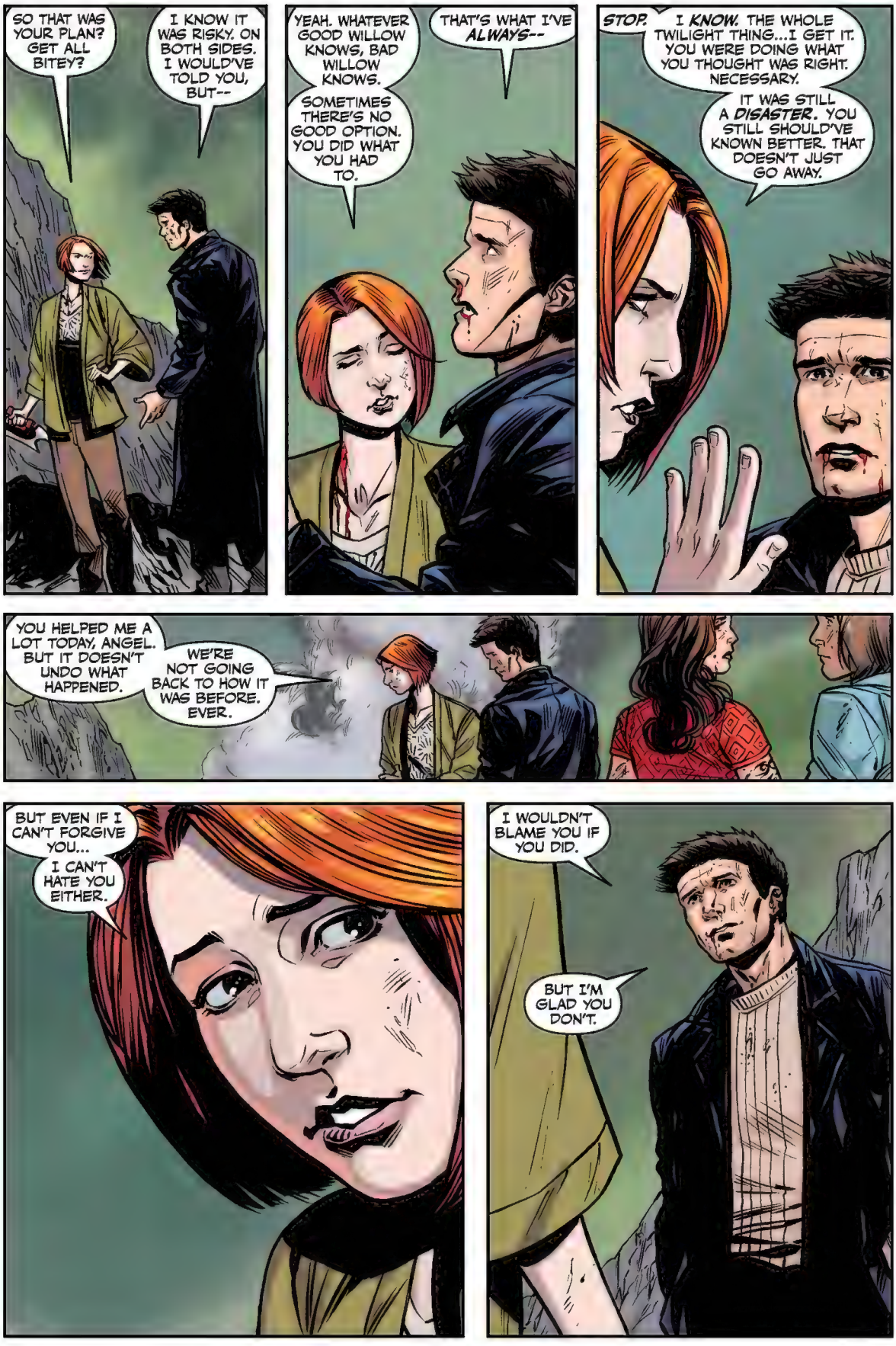
HEY, Y'KNOW, THAT FEELS KINDA...

...NICE...


YOU GOT TO HER JUST IN TIME.
SHE'S OUT. YOU CAN LET GO OF HER.

DAD...?

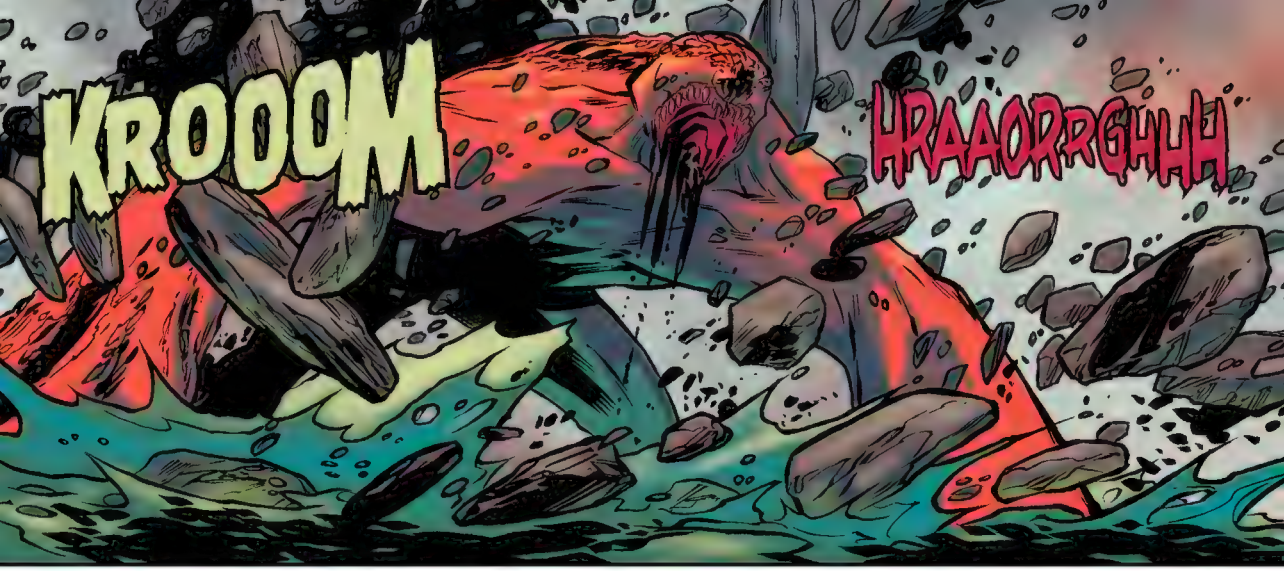
AH, HELL.
CONNOR, GET BACK!
NO! DON'T HURT HIM!
D-DO... WHAT SHE SAYS.
I C-CAN'T... CHANGE BACK. HUNGER'S... TOO STRONG.
FAITH... DO IT QUICK.
CONNOR... I'M SORRY.
THIS... IS HOW IT HAS TO BE...
NO.
YOU SAID IT WOULD BE OKAY.
I TRUSTED YOU.
MAKE IT *OKAY*, ANGEL.


SO THAT WAS YOUR PLAN? GET ALL BITEY?
I KNOW IT WAS RISKY. ON BOTH SIDES. I WOULD'VE TOLD YOU, BUT--
YEAH. WHATEVER GOOD WILLOW KNOWS, BAD WILLOW KNOWS.
THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS--
SOMETIMES THERE'S NO GOOD OPTION. YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO.
STOP.
I KNOW. THE WHOLE TWILIGHT THING...I GET IT. YOU WERE DOING WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT. NECESSARY.
IT WAS STILL A DISASTER. YOU STILL SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER. THAT DOESN'T JUST GO AWAY.
YOU HELPED ME A LOT TODAY, ANGEL. BUT IT DOESN'T UNDO WHAT HAPPENED.
WE'RE NOT GOING BACK TO HOW IT WAS BEFORE. EVER.
BUT EVEN IF I CAN'T FORGIVE YOU...
I CAN'T HATE YOU EITHER.
I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU IF YOU DID.
BUT I'M GLAD YOU DON'T.

SHUUUHRRIIPPP
HERE. THIS'LL TAKE YOU TO WHERE YOUR FRIENDS ARE.
YOU CAN MAKE A NEW START THERE. LIVE IN PEACE.
PRAISE THE DESTROYER! PLEASE, MY LORD, CHOOSE THE FAIREST AMONG US FOR YOUR BRIDE.
UM... I'M SPOKEN FOR.
YOU WILL COME WITH US? LEAD US?
IT'S YOUR HOME. MINE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE. BUT YOU DON'T NEED ME.
JUST...Y'KNOW, BE GOOD TO EACH OTHER. DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU'D HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU. AND, UH... THE FORCE WILL BE WITH YOU.
ALWAYS.
THE WISDOM OF THE DESTROYER. WE SHALL NEVER FORGET.
I KNOW. WORST MESSIAH EVER.
EH. DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF.
I EVER SIGN UP FOR A RELIGION, YOU GOT AS MUCH OF A SHOT AS THE OTHERS.
SO...I GUESS YOU'RE GOING WITH THEM.
THAT WAS THE PLAN.

YOU WERE AMAZING, FAITH. YOU *ARE* AMAZING.
OUT OF ALL OF US, YOU'VE GROWN THE MOST.
YEAH, I KIND OF RIGGED THE GAME BY SETTING THE BAR REAL LOW. BUT THANKS.
AND YOU. *YOU* ARE AN *INCREDIBLE* GUY.
THANKS FOR BACKING ME UP. THANKS FOR NOTICING WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD AND PROVING I'M NOT CRAZY. JUST *THANKS.*
BE HAPPY, CONNOR. NO ONE DESERVES IT MORE.
SO, ANGEL...
YOU GOT ME OFF EARTH. PUT ME IN A POSITION TO RESTORE MAGIC.
A DEAL'S A DEAL.
YOU'RE WEARING THE *TOOTH OF AMMUT,* RIGHT? SORT OF A SOUL MAGNET?
THE SCYTHE'S GOT MYSTIC WARDS... PROTECTION AGAINST ITS ENERGY BEING DRAINED. BUT I CAN SHUT THEM OFF.
IF THERE'S ANY PART OF GILES IN THE SCYTHE...
...IT'S ALL YOURS.

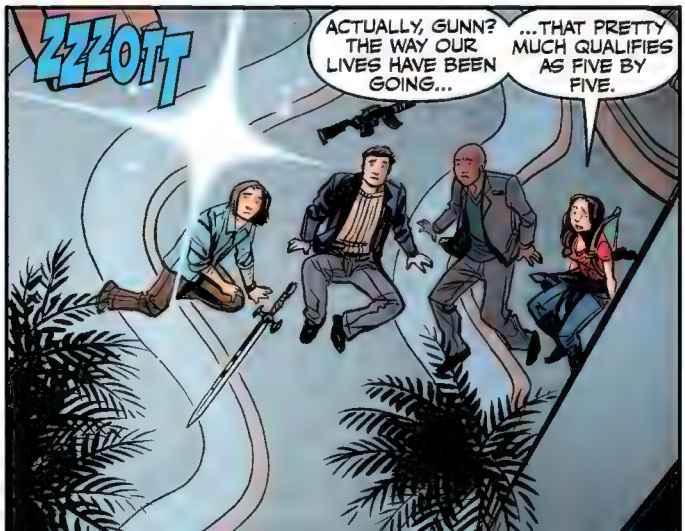
HNN...
OH!
WOW. I'D NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN-- I THINK I FELT HIM--
YOU OKAY? YOU GET WHAT YOU NEED?
YEAH. AND I'M FINE.
YOU FELT GILES? SO THIS IS, LIKE... LEGIT?
VERY LEGIT. FAITH... HE'S TRYING SOMETHING BIG. LIKE I AM.
BE FOR HIM WHAT HE WAS FOR ME.
BUT FAITH...DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF--
KRRRKKKKKK


KROOOM
HRAAORRGHHH

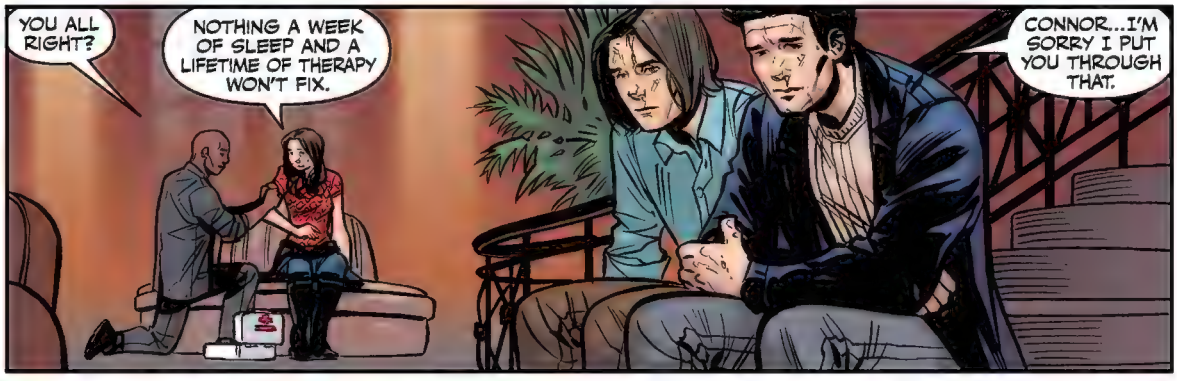
RUN.
RUN!

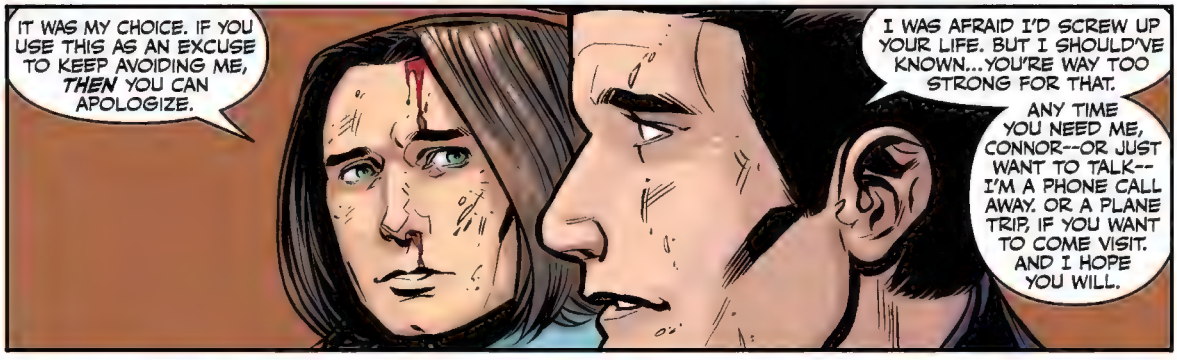
LOS ANGELES. THE HYPERION HOTEL.
DAMN! MY COFFEE'S NOT EVEN COLD. THINGS EITHER WENT RIGHT OR--

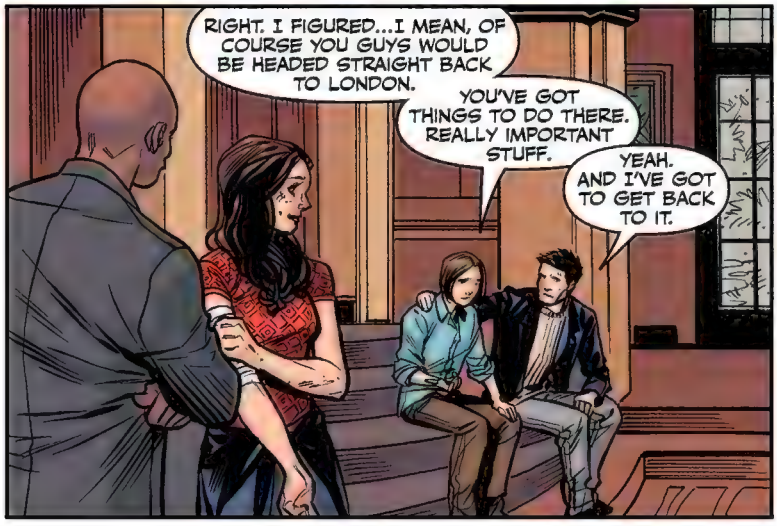
VZAASH
--HORRIBLY WRONG IT IS!


ZZZOTT
ACTUALLY, GUNN? THE WAY OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN GOING...
...THAT PRETTY MUCH QUALIFIES AS FIVE BY FIVE.

SO THE RIFT CLOSING MEANS WILLOW TOOK CARE OF BUSINESS?
IT MEANS...
"...SHE'S ON HER WAY."


YOU ALL RIGHT?
NOTHING A WEEK OF SLEEP AND A LIFETIME OF THERAPY WON'T FIX.
CONNOR...I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH THAT.


IT WAS MY CHOICE. IF YOU USE THIS AS AN EXCUSE TO KEEP AVOIDING ME, *THEN* YOU CAN APOLOGIZE.
I WAS AFRAID I'D SCREW UP YOUR LIFE. BUT I SHOULD'VE KNOWN...YOU'RE WAY TOO STRONG FOR THAT.
ANY TIME YOU NEED ME, CONNOR--OR JUST WANT TO TALK--I'M A PHONE CALL AWAY. OR A PLANE TRIP, IF YOU WANT TO COME VISIT. AND I HOPE YOU WILL.


RIGHT. I FIGURED...I MEAN, OF COURSE YOU GUYS WOULD BE HEADED STRAIGHT BACK TO LONDON.
YOU'VE GOT THINGS TO DO THERE. REALLY IMPORTANT STUFF.
YEAH. AND I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO IT.

NEXT WEEK.

THAT WAS A HELL OF A CHANCE YOU TOOK WITH WILLOW.
I COULDN'T SEND HER THROUGH THE RIFT THE WAY SHE WAS. WE'D HAVE BEEN PUTTING ALL OF EARTH AT RISK.
SO I TOOK A CALCULATED RISK. A VAMPIRE BITE STIMULATES THE BRAIN'S PLEASURE CENTERS. I FIGURED IT WOULD CALM HER DOWN.
IF IT DIDN'T, I WOULD HAVE KILLED HER. AND IF I'D LOST CONTROL, I KNEW YOU'D KILL ME.
SHE KNEW IT TOO. WHEN SHE TOLD YOU TO BE FOR ME WHAT I WAS FOR HER...
YEAH, YEAH. EVERYONE KEEPS REMINDING ME.
AND I GOTTA SAY, I'M PRETTY DAMN SICK OF THE RESPONSIBILITY. I'M NOT FRIGGIN' SPIDER-MAN.
I UNDERSTAND. IT WON'T BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS MUCH LONGER.
THE REST OF GILES'S SOUL IS ALL IN ONE PLACE. I JUST HAVE TO FIND IT.
I'M ALMOST THERE, FAITH.
IT'S ALMOST OVER.

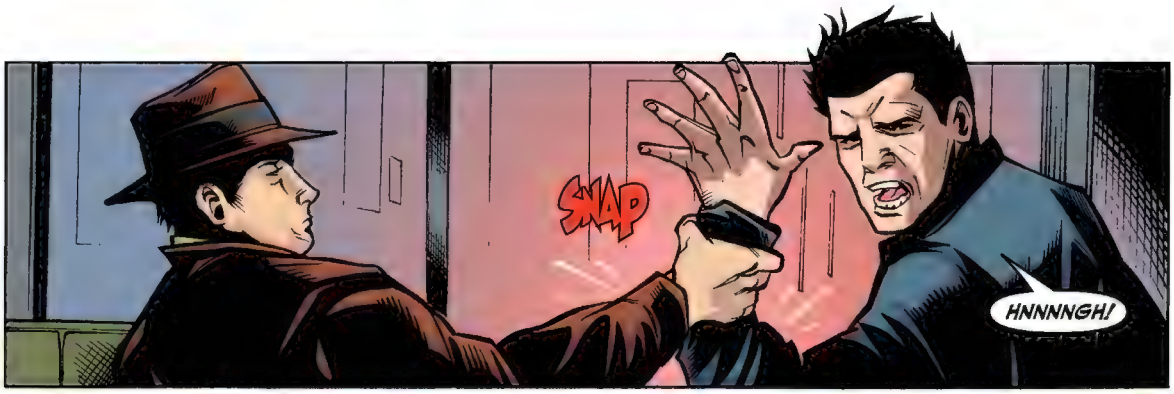
LONDON.
OH, GOD, MARIANNE...
SHE'S DEAD. PATSY'S IN HOSPITAL.
HOW? WHO DID THIS?
DRUSILLA.

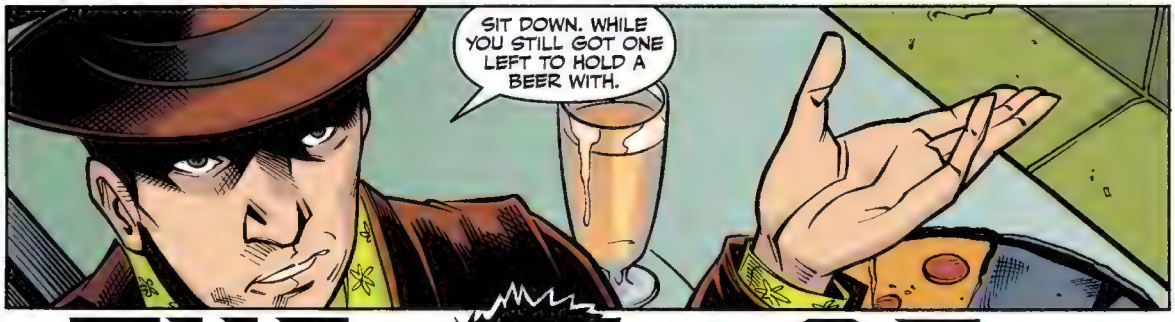
KRAK
CRAZY VAMPIRE BITCH. WE'LL FIND HER. MAKE HER PAY.
WE'VE TRIED. NO ONE KNOWS WHERE SHE IS. THERE WAS A FIRE... A RIOT...ANGEL STARTED IT. SHE GOT AWAY IN THE CONFUSION.

ANGEL? HE IS HERE!
OF COURSE HE'D HELP HER ESCAPE. ONE MORE SLAYER'S BLOOD ON HIS HANDS. I SWEAR TO YOU, DAPHNE, I'LL GET HIM. FOR LIZ, FOR ALL THE OTHERS...
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
PATSY SAW ANGEL. FIGHTING THE MOB. HE WASN'T ALONE.

I DON'T CARE WHO'S WITH HIM. I'LL KILL THEM ALL.
NADIRA...
...HE WAS BACK TO BACK WITH FAITH.
THE END

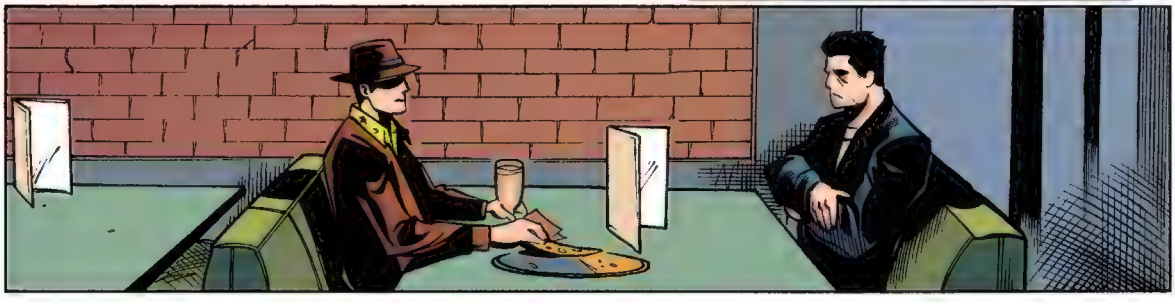
TINK
TINK
ANGEL. OVER HERE.
GRAB A SLICE. ONLY AUTHENTIC NEW YORK PIZZA IN LONDON. THEY FILTER THE WATER IN THE DOUGH TO MATCH THE BIG APPLE'S. YOU'RE GONNA LOVE IT.
YOU'RE WORKING WITH PEARL AND NASH?
ARE YOU CRAZY?
THAT'S NOT A VERY NICE WORD.
TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE. NOW. I NEED TO TAKE THEM DOWN BEFORE--

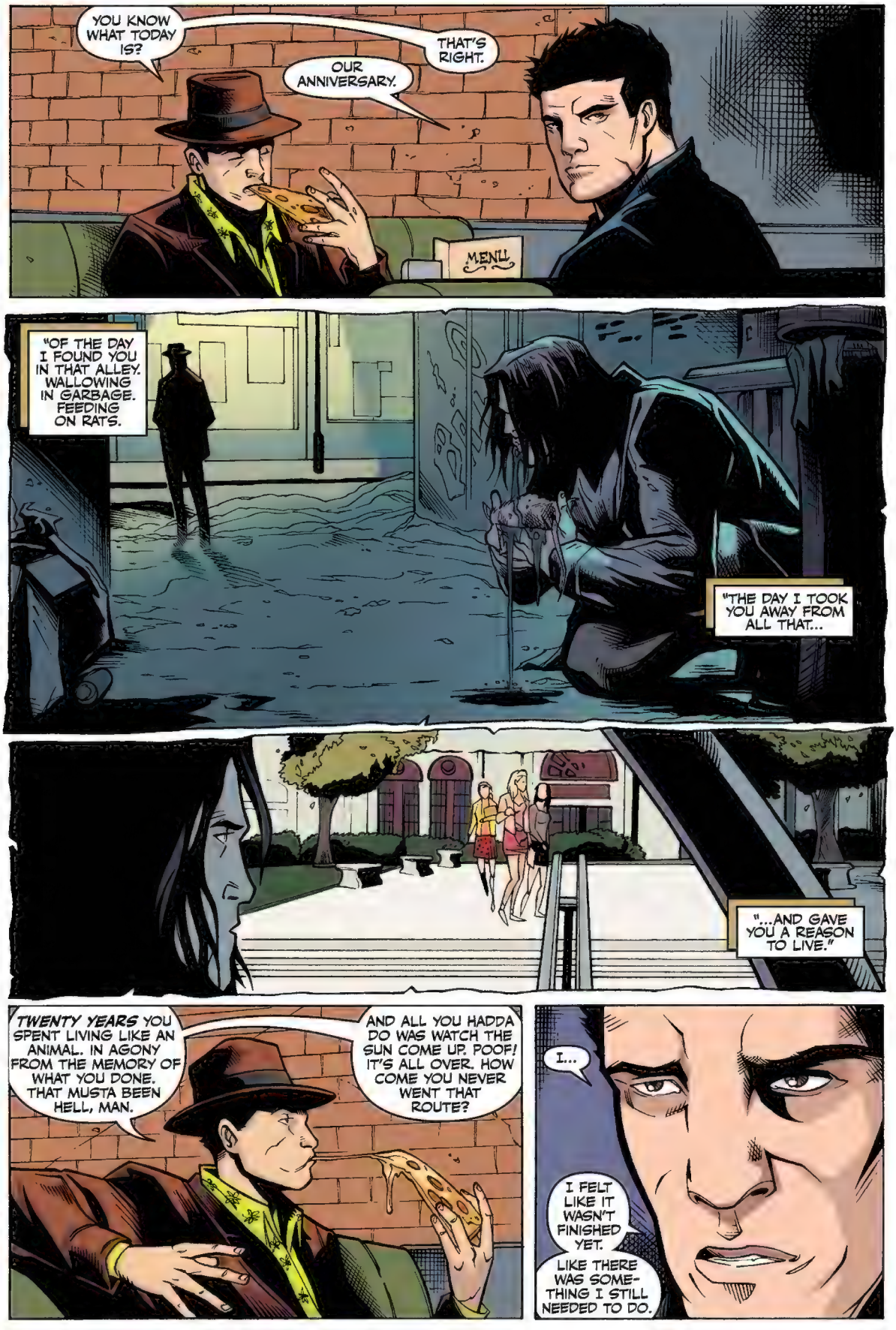




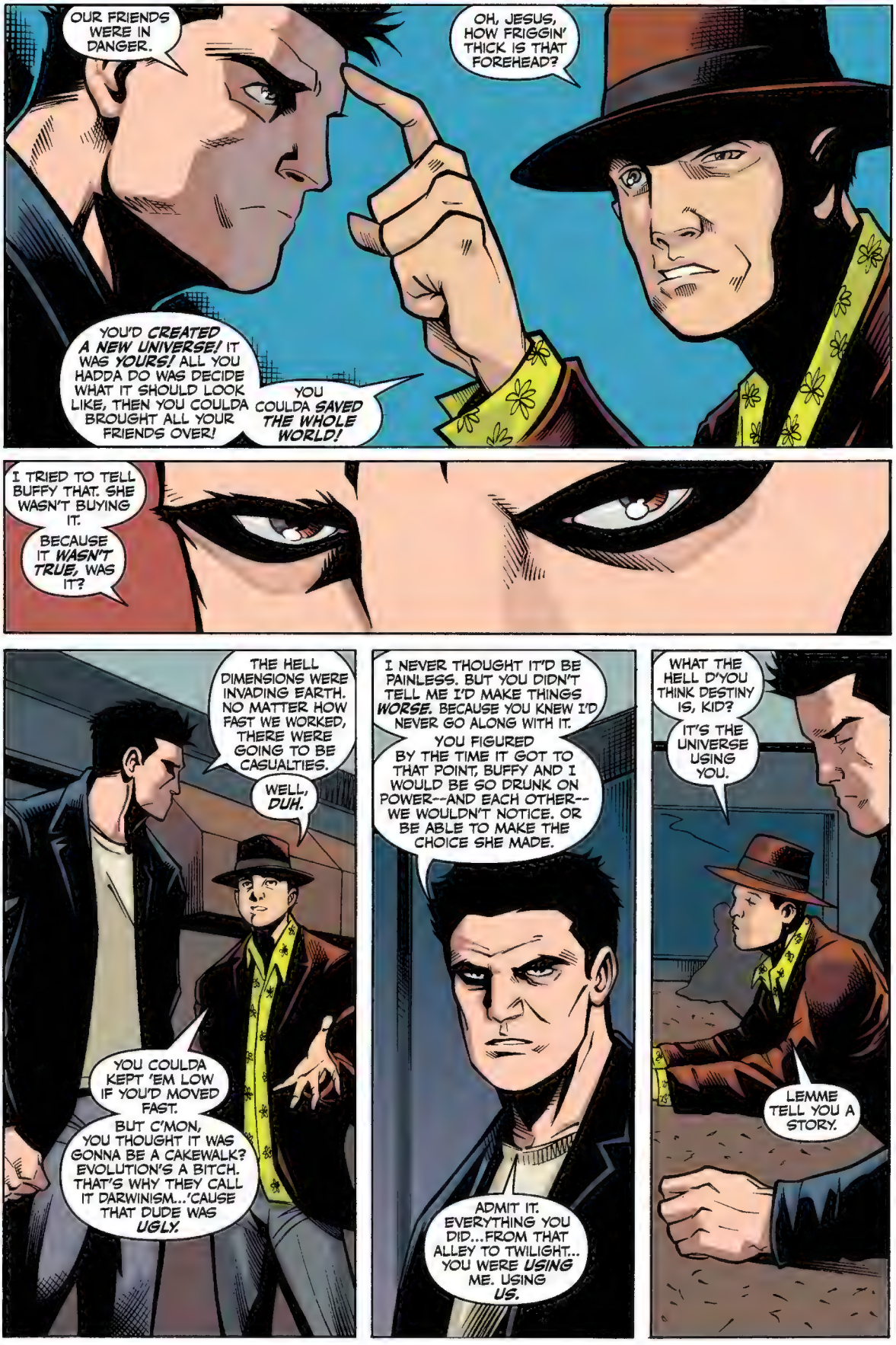
THE HERO OF HIS OWN STORY

PART ONE: WHISTLER




YOU KNOW WHAT TODAY IS?
OUR ANNIVERSARY.
THAT'S RIGHT.
MENU
"OF THE DAY I FOUND YOU IN THAT ALLEY. WALLOWING IN GARBAGE. FEEDING ON RATS.
"THE DAY I TOOK YOU AWAY FROM ALL THAT...
"...AND GAVE YOU A REASON TO LIVE."
TWENTY YEARS YOU SPENT LIVING LIKE AN ANIMAL. IN AGONY FROM THE MEMORY OF WHAT YOU DONE. THAT MUSTA BEEN HELL, MAN.
AND ALL YOU HADDA DO WAS WATCH THE SUN COME UP. POOF! IT'S ALL OVER. HOW COME YOU NEVER WENT THAT ROUTE?
I...
I FELT LIKE IT WASN'T FINISHED YET.
LIKE THERE WAS SOMETHING I STILL NEEDED TO DO.

OR SOMEONE, AM I RIGHT?
YOU AND BUFFY... ONCE YOU MET, IT WAS A DONE DEAL. YOU WERE GONNA DIE TOGETHER, KILL EACH OTHER, OR CHANGE THE WHOLE FRIGGIN' WORLD. IT WAS DESTINY.
BUT NOT PREDESTINED. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE. YOU ALWAYS HAD A CHOICE. BOTH OF YOU.
I SAW TO IT YOU MADE THE RIGHT ONE. THAT YOU FOUND EACH OTHER. KILLED AND DIED FOR EACH OTHER. FELL IN LOVE.
EMBRACED THE POWER YOU HAD COMIN' AND USED IT TO MAKE A NEW REALITY. A BETTER ONE. WHERE EVERYONE COULD EVOLVE. FULFILL THEIR DESTINY.
AND YOU THREW THE GAME IN THE NINTH INNING!
SKRAAMM
SORRY. MY BAD. GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO THEM?
JUST A LITTLE TRANCE. THEY'LL BE FINE. I'M NOT A SADIST LIKE THAT DONNY AND MARIE FROM HELL YOU FORCED ME TO TEAM UP WITH.
I GOTTA ASK... WHY, MAN? AFTER ALL THE WORK YOU DID...WE DID...
...WHY'D YOU TOSS IT ALL AWAY?


OUR FRIENDS WERE IN DANGER.
OH, JESUS, HOW FRIGGIN' THICK IS THAT FOREHEAD?
YOU'D CREATED A NEW UNIVERSE! IT WAS YOURS! ALL YOU HADDA DO WAS DECIDE WHAT IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE, THEN YOU COULDA BROUGHT ALL YOUR FRIENDS OVER!
YOU COULDA SAVED THE WHOLE WORLD!
I TRIED TO TELL BUFFY THAT. SHE WASN'T BUYING IT.
BECAUSE IT WASN'T TRUE, WAS IT?
THE HELL DIMENSIONS WERE INVADING EARTH. NO MATTER HOW FAST WE WORKED, THERE WERE GOING TO BE CASUALTIES.
WELL, DUH.
YOU COULDA KEPT 'EM LOW IF YOU'D MOVED FAST.
BUT C'MON, YOU THOUGHT IT WAS GONNA BE A CAKEWALK? EVOLUTION'S A BITCH. THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT DARWINISM...'CAUSE THAT DUDE WAS UGLY.
I NEVER THOUGHT IT'D BE PAINLESS. BUT YOU DIDN'T TELL ME I'D MAKE THINGS WORSE. BECAUSE YOU KNEW I'D NEVER GO ALONG WITH IT.
YOU FIGURED BY THE TIME IT GOT TO THAT POINT, BUFFY AND I WOULD BE SO DRUNK ON POWER--AND EACH OTHER--WE WOULDN'T NOTICE. OR BE ABLE TO MAKE THE CHOICE SHE MADE.
ADMIT IT. EVERYTHING YOU DID...FROM THAT ALLEY TO TWILIGHT... YOU WERE USING ME. USING US.
WHAT THE HELL D'YOU THINK DESTINY IS, KID?
IT'S THE UNIVERSE USING YOU.
LEMME TELL YOU A STORY.

"YOU THINK YOU AND BLONDIE KNOCKING BOOTS WAS RADICAL? A VAMPIRE AND A SLAYER?
"TRY A PUREBLOOD DEMON AND AN AGENT OF THE POWERS THAT BE. EVIL INCARNATE AND A SERVANT OF GOOD.
"OR, AS I CALL THEM, MOM AND DAD.
"SURE, THE HISTORY OF THE OCCULT'S FULL OF STRANGE ALLIANCES. BUT THIS...THIS WAS WAY OUTSIDE THE BOX.
"IT WAS ALSO KINDA REVOLUTIONARY WHEN DEMONS AND HIGHER BEINGS TEAMED UP TO KILL MY FOLKS. BUT THEY WEREN'T MAKING SOME STATEMENT ABOUT UNITY.
"THEY WERE CLEANING UP A MESS. WIPING OUT A COUPLE WHO BROKE THE RULES--WHO TRIED TO CHANGE THE WAY THE UNIVERSE WORKS--FOR LOVE.
"COURSE, THERE WAS ONE LOOSE END.
"ME.

"THE DEMONS WANTED TO EAT ME. BIG SURPRISE. BUT I GUESS THE POWERS FELT BAD... KILLIN' ONE OF THEIR OWN AIN'T NEAR AS COMMON FOR THEM.
"AND THEY SAW I WAS SOMETHING NEW. *UNIQUE.* A FOOT IN EACH WORLD... KINDA LIKE *YOU.*
"SO THEY DECIDED INSTEAD OF KILLING ME, THEY COULD USE ME. TO MAKE SURE THE NATURAL ORDER NEVER GOT TOO OUTTA WHACK AGAIN.
"THEY GAVE ME *THE SIGHT.* PRECOGNITION. THE ABILITY TO SEE WHAT POSSIBLE FUTURES WERE COMIN' DOWN THE PIKE.
"AND THEY TOLD ME TO MAKE SURE THE PENDULUM NEVER SWUNG TOO FAR EITHER WAY. TO HELP WHERE I WAS NEEDED.
"NOT *PERSONALLY.* THAT WASN'T MY STYLE. I OPERATED BEHIND THE SCENES. FOUND PROMISING CANDIDATES.
"IF THE DARK AGES GOT TOO GLOOMY, I LET IN SOME LIGHT.
"SOMETIMES I HADDA GO THE OTHER WAY, TOO. NOT OFTEN. PEOPLE HAVE A WAY OF SCREWIN' THINGS UP ON THEIR OWN.
"BUT I COULDN'T GET SENTIMENTAL ABOUT IT. BALANCE. THAT WAS WHAT COUNTED. EVEN IF IT MEANT SOMETIMES DOIN' THINGS THAT LEFT A SICK FEELING IN MY GUT.
"I *KNOW* ABOUT MAKING HARD CHOICES, KIDDO. AND I *ALWAYS* CHOSE THE GREATER GOOD.

THINK ABOUT HOW THAT FELT. FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, HELPIN' GOOD PEOPLE PUT IT ALL ON THE LINE TO CHANGE THE WORLD...KNOWIN' AT THE END OF THE DAY THEY GOTTA FAIL.
BALANCE IS IMPORTANT. IT'S IN MY BLOOD. IT'S GOTTA BE MAINTAINED... OR ELSE. BUT I'M NOT MADE OF STONE. IT GOT TO ME.
THERE HAD TO BE A BETTER WAY. A WAY TO KEEP THINGS EVEN AND STILL MAKE 'EM BETTER. AND I FINALLY FOUND IT.
YOU.
YOU AND BUFFY.
YOU COULDA BIRTHED A NEW UNIVERSE. ONE WHERE GOOD AND EVIL, MAGIC AND SCIENCE, LIGHT AND DARK MERGED TOGETHER.
I LIKE TO THINK THE UNIVERSE GOT THE IDEA TO BRING YOU TOGETHER FROM MY FOLKS. THAT THEIR DEATH WASN'T FOR NOTHING, Y'KNOW?
WHERE THE BALANCE WAS MAINTAINED 'CAUSE EVERYONE EVOLVED. INTO SOMETHING HIGHER.
"BUT YOU GOT COLD FEET. THREW IT ALL AWAY...AND THE PLANET WITH IT.
"BUFFY DESTROYED THE SEED OF MAGIC. CUT EARTH OFF FROM THE MYSTIC PLANES. CUT ME OFF FROM THE POWERS. TOOK MAGIC RIGHT OUTTA THE WORLD.
"TILTED THE BALANCE SO FAR SO FAST IT WAS LIKE BEIN' ON THE TITANIC WHEN IT WENT ASS UP. AND I'D KNOW.
"YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHAT THAT'S LIKE? WHEN YOUR WHOLE EXISTENCE IS BALANCE, HAVIN' THAT RIPPED OUT FROM UNDER YOU?
"IT'S LIKE HAVIN' A STROKE. BEIN' STRUCK BLIND AND DEAF. LIKE LOSIN' PART OF MYSELF. AND IF THAT'S HOW IT WAS FOR ME, IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR THE EARTH.
"BUT THAT AIN'T THE WORST PART."

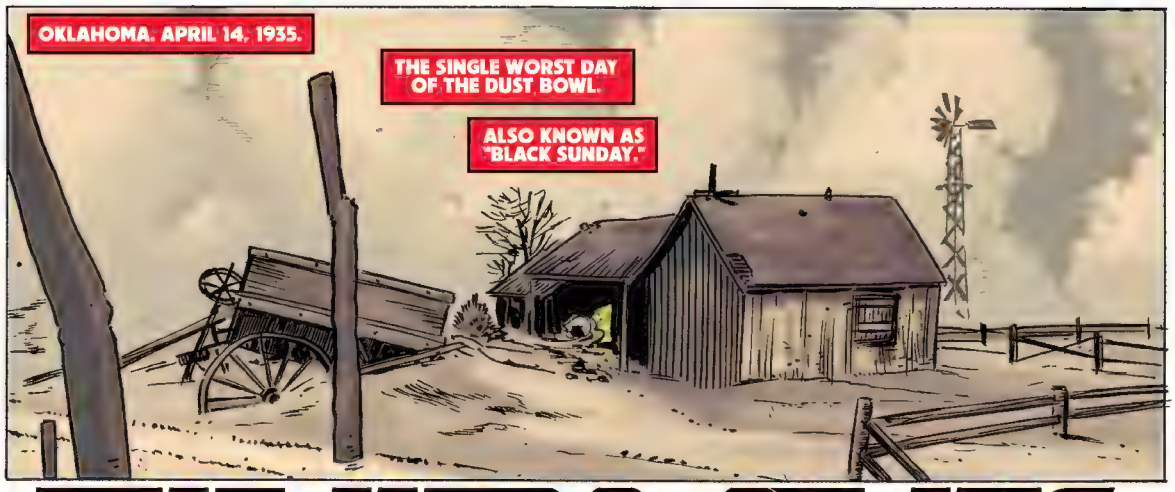
BEFORE MY PRECOGNITION CUT OUT, I GOT ONE LAST VISION.
A LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF THIS WORLD.
"IT WAS *DEAD.*
"YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN HELL DIMENSIONS?
"THIS. *THIS* WAS *HELL.*"

EVERY VISION I EVER SAW WAS A "MAYBE." IT COULD BE CHANGED. THIS CAN TOO...I GOTTA BELIEVE THAT. IT'S NOT TOO LATE.
BUT EVERY DAY THE WINDOW CLOSES A LITTLE. LIKE THE ADS SAY...ACT NOW.
THERE'S STILL A LOTTA MAGIC ITEMS WITH CHARGES IN 'EM. LIKE BATTERIES IN A BLACKOUT. I'M TRYIN' TO GET 'EM BEFORE PEOPLE USE 'EM UP.
THEN I'M GONNA...WELL, IT'S KINDA COMPLICATED, BUT LET'S SAY GRIND 'EM UP. DISTILL A PILE OF PURE, UNCUT MAGIC.
THEN SPREAD IT AROUND THE WORLD. LIKE JOHNNY APPLESEED.
IT'LL GET INHALED, ABSORBED...INTO EVERY LIVING CREATURE ON EARTH.
NO NEED FOR A SEED. MAGIC'LL JUST BE IN EVERYTHING. PART OF NATURE.
AND IT'LL EVOLVE. THE WORLD WILL EVOLVE.
INTO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL.

AT WHAT COST?
WELL, SURE. YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT A MAJOR CHANGE IN PEOPLE. SOME WON'T MAKE IT. MAYBE...TWO BILLION.
BUT THINK OF THE BIG PICTURE, MAN! THE WORLD'S OVERCROWDED! WE'RE FISHIN' OUT THE SEAS! MELTING THE ICECAPS!
LOOK, DO I LIKE IT? NO. BUT THIS IS HOW IT'S GOTTA BE. EITHER SOME DIE NOW OR THE WORLD DIES DOWN THE ROAD.
YOU THINK I LIKE WORKING WITH PEARL AND NASH? HELL NO. YOU'RE MY GUY.
I WANNA GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT, ANGEL. TO CLEAN UP THE MESS YOU MADE. SAVE THE WORLD, LIKE YOU ALWAYS WANTED.
I WANT YOU WITH ME ON THIS.
WHISTLER...YOU'RE RIGHT. I OWE YOU EVERYTHING.
YOU GAVE ME A PURPOSE. A CHANCE AT REDEMPTION.
YOU GAVE ME HER.
I OWE YOU MORE THAN I COULD EVER REPAY.
OF COURSE I WANT TO HELP YOU.

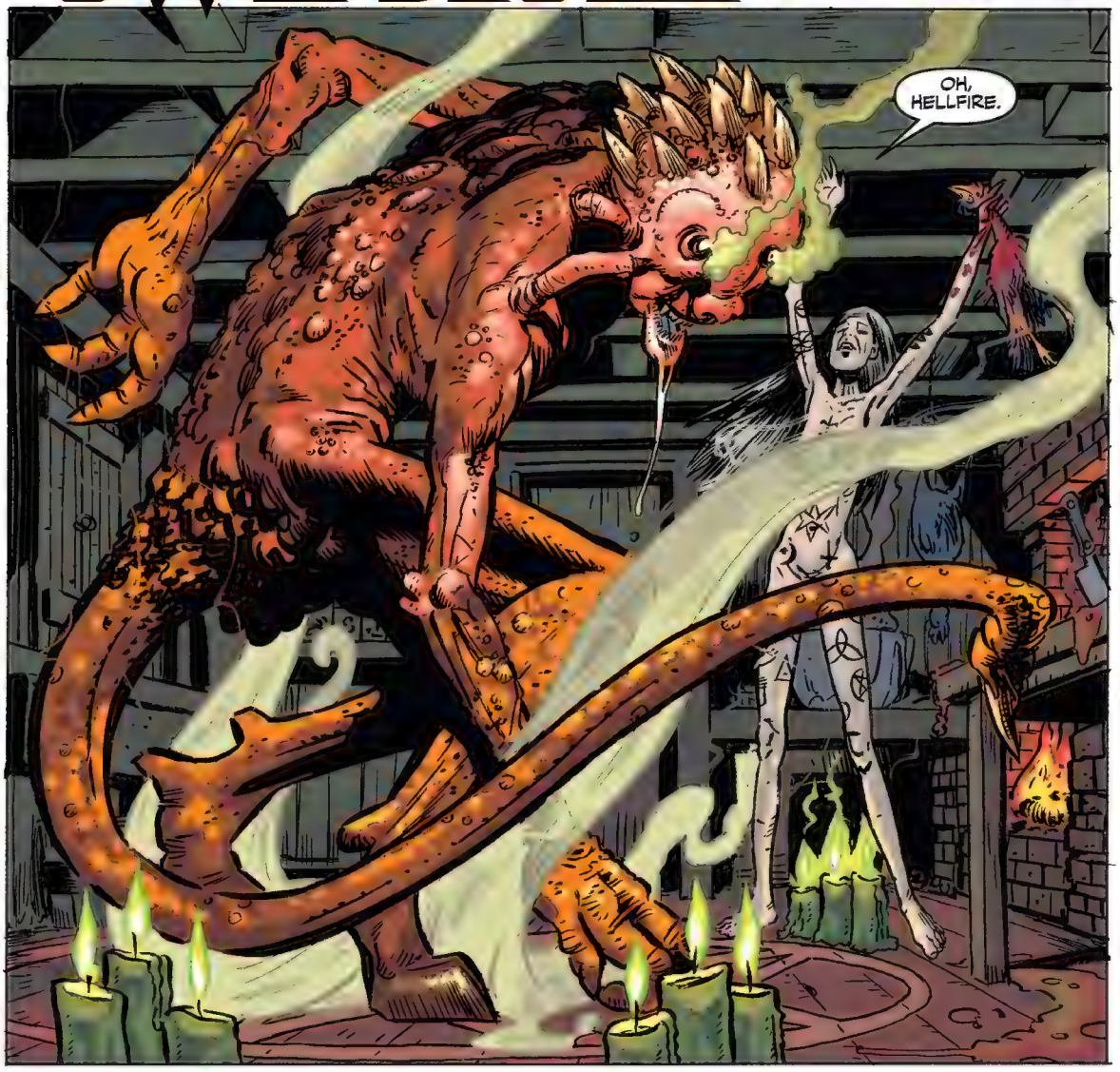
BUT YOU HAVE TO LET ME.
THE END OF MAGIC...IT DID SOMETHING TO YOU. AFFECTED YOUR MIND. IT HAD TO, THE BALANCE BEING THROWN OFF LIKE THAT.
I'LL *FIX* IT. I'LL FIND A WAY. GET YOU THINKING CLEARLY AGAIN.
JUST SAY YOU'LL LET ME HELP YOU.
SCREW YOU, MAN.
WHISTLER.
YOU KNOW I CAN'T LET YOU GO THROUGH WITH--
SHLUKK

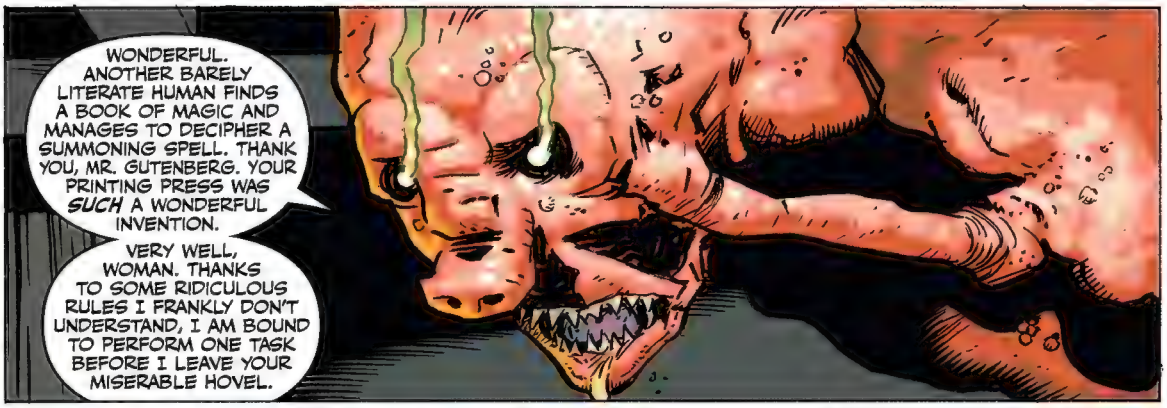
KRIK
:HCCH... KKUHH...:
I CAN'T.
YOU WERE ALWAYS MY FAVORITE, KID. I CAN'T DO THAT TO YOU.
SO DON'T MAKE ME.
WHEN YOUR STOMACH GROWS BACK, TRY THE EGGPLANT PARM. IT'S TO DIE FOR.
AND DON'T EVER LET ME SEE YOU AGAIN.
TINK
TINK

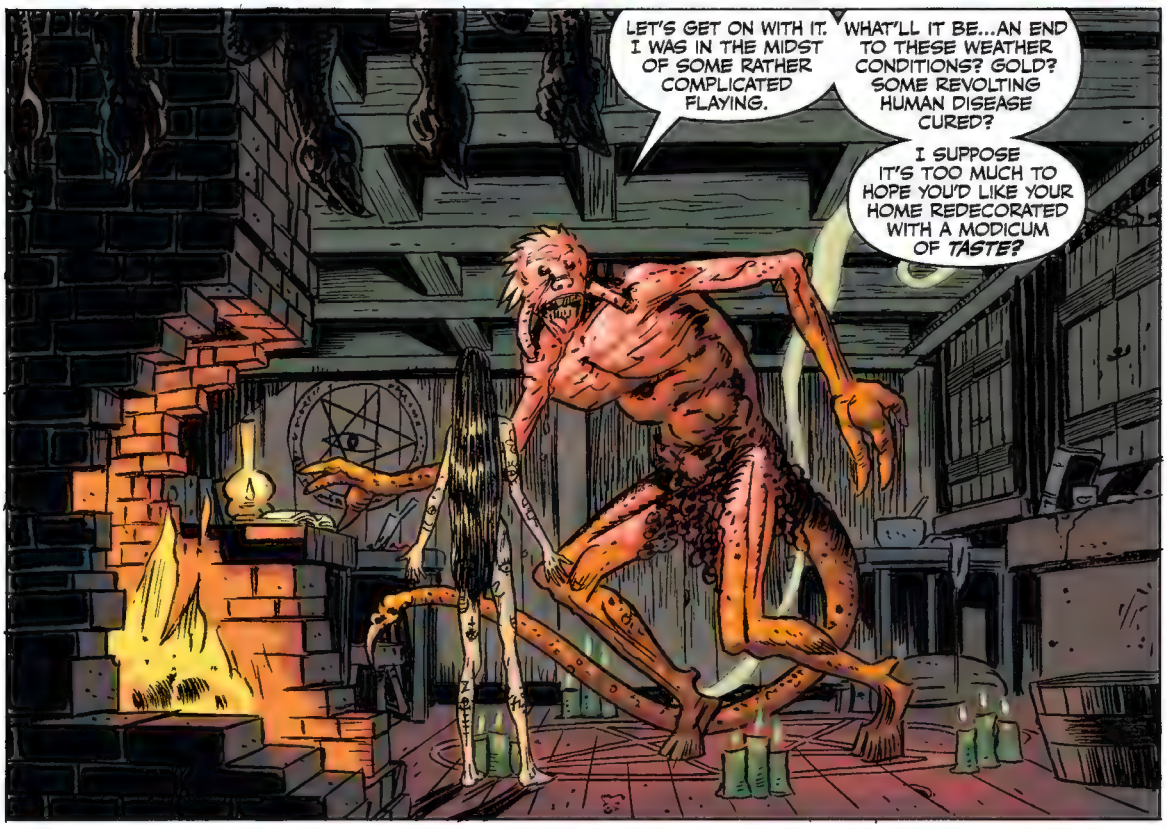


THE HERO OF HIS OWN STORY

PART TWO: PEARL AND DASH

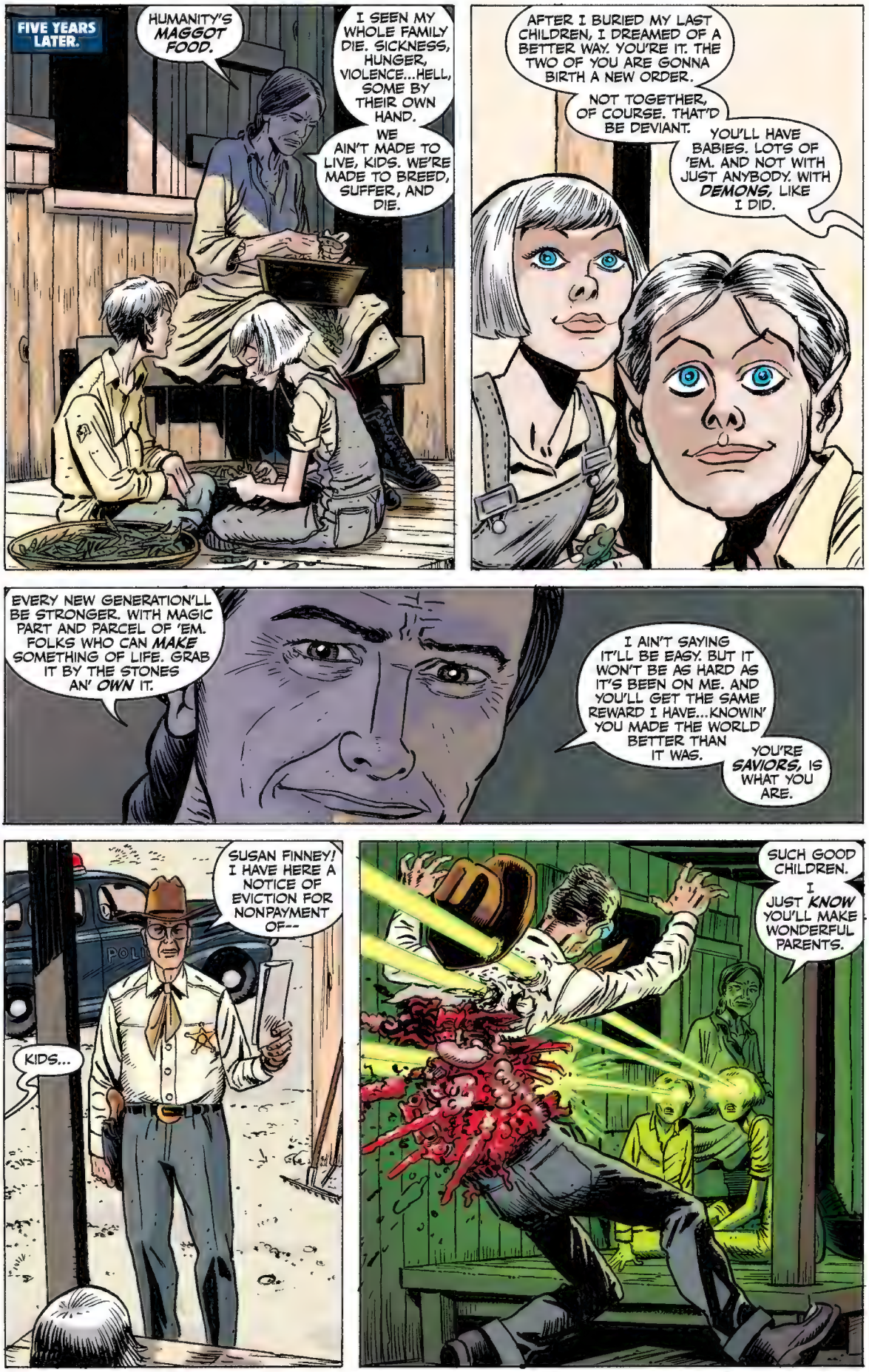



WONDERFUL. ANOTHER BARELY LITERATE HUMAN FINDS A BOOK OF MAGIC AND MANAGES TO DECIPHER A SUMMONING SPELL. THANK YOU, MR. GUTENBERG. YOUR PRINTING PRESS WAS *SUCH* A WONDERFUL INVENTION.
VERY WELL, WOMAN. THANKS TO SOME RIDICULOUS RULES I FRANKLY DON'T UNDERSTAND, I AM BOUND TO PERFORM ONE TASK BEFORE I LEAVE YOUR MISERABLE HOVEL.


LET'S GET ON WITH IT. I WAS IN THE MIDST OF SOME RATHER COMPLICATED FLAYING.
WHAT'LL IT BE...AN END TO THESE WEATHER CONDITIONS? GOLD? SOME REVOLTING HUMAN DISEASE CURED?
I SUPPOSE IT'S TOO MUCH TO HOPE YOU'D LIKE YOUR HOME REDECORATED WITH A MODICUM OF *TASTE?*

I WANT YOU TO MAKE ME PREGNANT.

THEN AGAIN, I'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR FLAYING TOMORROW.


FIVE YEARS LATER.
HUMANITY'S MAGGOT FOOD.
I SEEN MY WHOLE FAMILY DIE. SICKNESS, HUNGER, VIOLENCE...HELL, SOME BY THEIR OWN HAND.
WE AIN'T MADE TO LIVE, KIDS. WE'RE MADE TO BREED, SUFFER, AND DIE.
AFTER I BURIED MY LAST CHILDREN, I DREAMED OF A BETTER WAY. YOU'RE IT. THE TWO OF YOU ARE GONNA BIRTH A NEW ORDER.
NOT TOGETHER, OF COURSE. THAT'D BE DEVIANT.
YOU'LL HAVE BABIES. LOTS OF 'EM. AND NOT WITH JUST ANYBODY. WITH DEMONS, LIKE I DID.
EVERY NEW GENERATION'LL BE STRONGER. WITH MAGIC PART AND PARCEL OF 'EM. FOLKS WHO CAN MAKE SOMETHING OF LIFE. GRAB IT BY THE STONES AN' OWN IT.
I AIN'T SAYING IT'LL BE EASY. BUT IT WON'T BE AS HARD AS IT'S BEEN ON ME. AND YOU'LL GET THE SAME REWARD I HAVE...KNOWIN' YOU MADE THE WORLD BETTER THAN IT WAS.
YOU'RE SAVIORS, IS WHAT YOU ARE.
SUSAN FINNEY! I HAVE HERE A NOTICE OF EVICTION FOR NONPAYMENT OF--
KIDS...
SUCH GOOD CHILDREN.
I JUST KNOW YOU'LL MAKE WONDERFUL PARENTS.

THIRTY YEARS LATER.
NO! STOP IT!
YOU'RE KILLING THEM!
YOU'RE KILLING MY CHILDREN!

AAA!
GOD BE PRAISED. THOUGH IT COSTS OUR LIVES, TODAY WE CLEANSE THE EARTH OF ALL TRACES OF YOU AND YOUR FOUL OFFSPRING--

BBLAM
THE HELL YOU SAY.

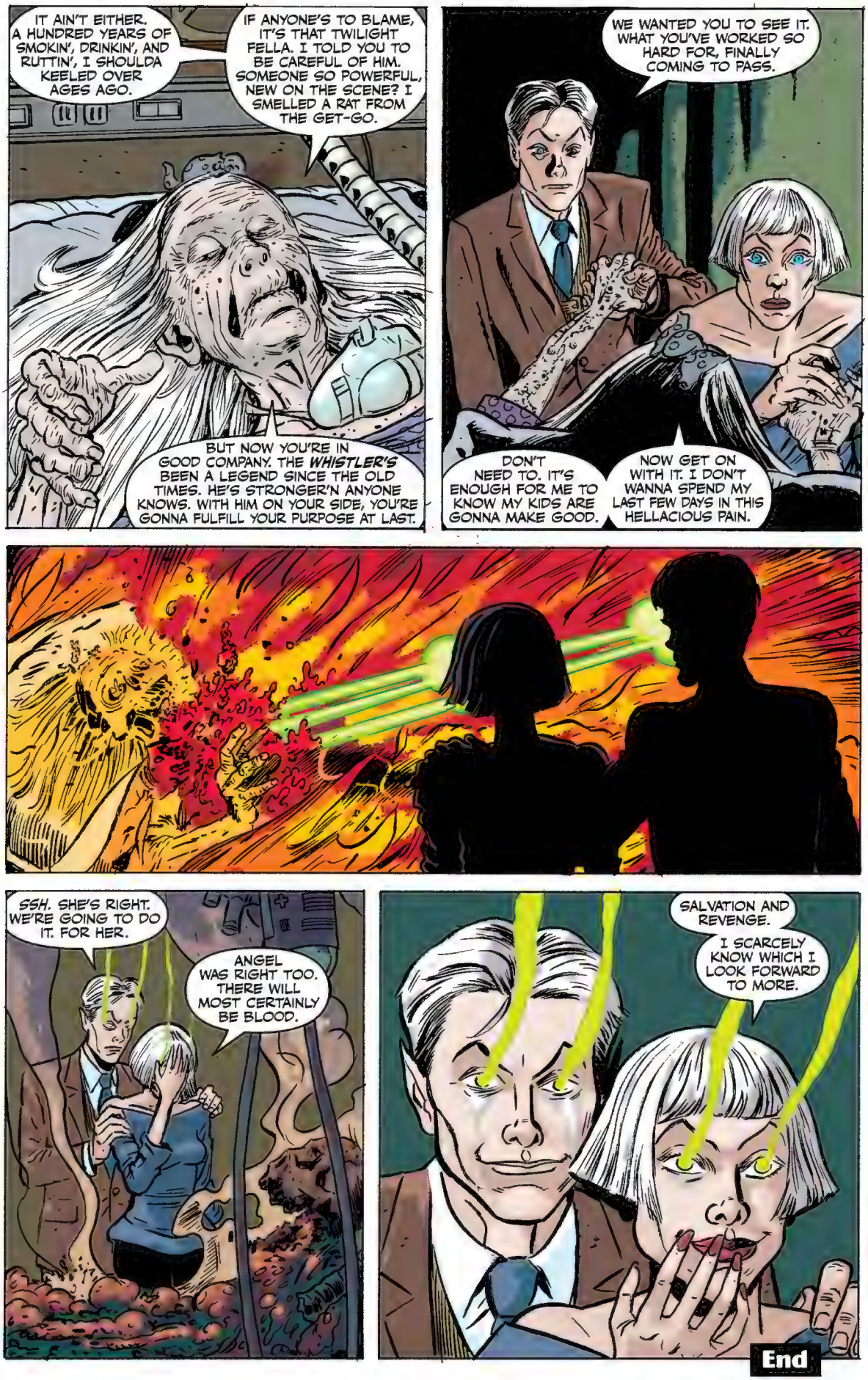
YOU'VE WON NOTHING, CRONE. YOUR BASTARD GRANDCHILDREN ARE ALL DEAD, AND YOU'LL SOON FOLLOW.
YOU ALWAYS HAD A MOUTH ON YOU, ALASDAIR COAMES. ONE OF THESE DAYS I'M GONNA WELD IT SHUT.
GO ON, RUN, YA YELLOW SISSY.

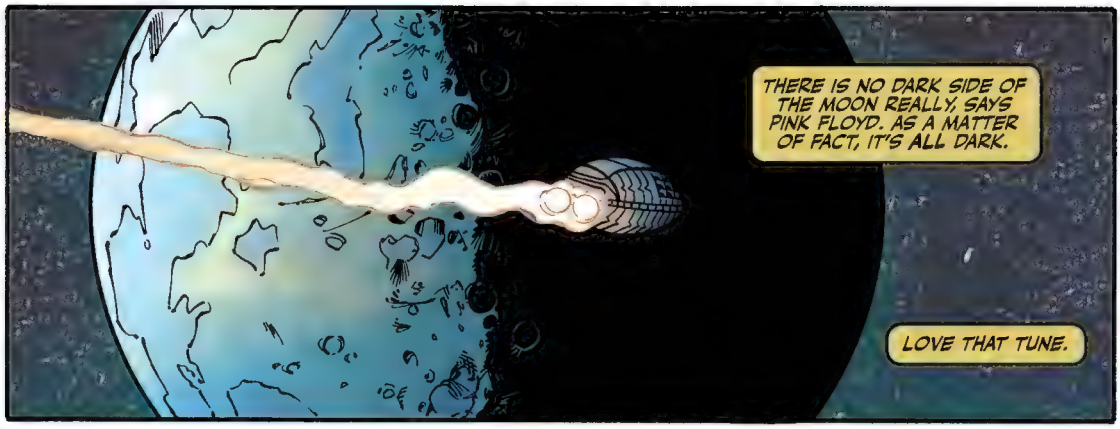
HELLFIRE AND DAMNATION. A QUARTER CENTURY'S WORTH OF FINE BREEDING RIGHT DOWN THE DRAIN.
GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE MORE.

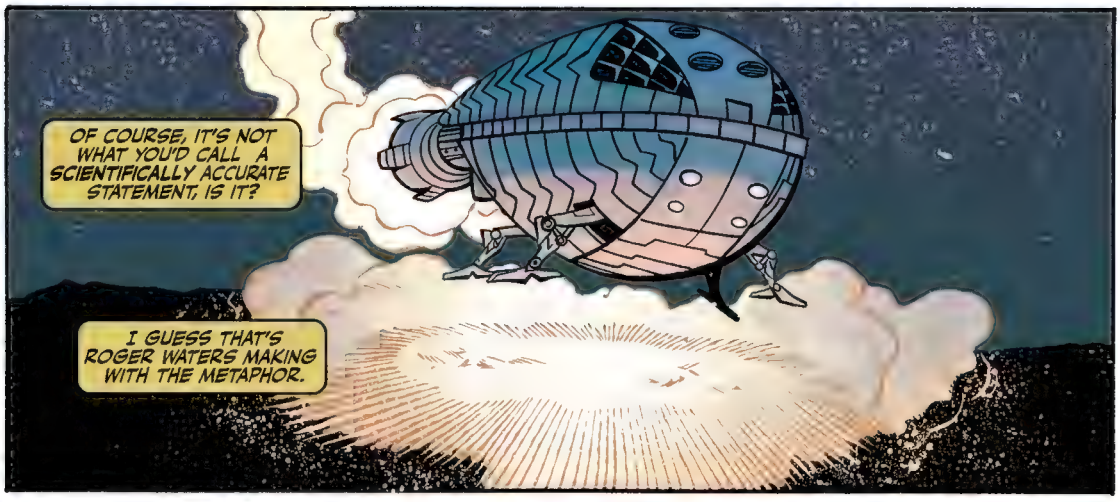
5+5=66
MAMA, I CAN'T. I CAN'T GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN.
OH, HUSH UP, CHILD. I LOST MY SHARE OF BABIES BEFORE YOU TWO CAME ALONG. IT HURTS, ALL RIGHT, BUT YOU BUCK UP AND CARRY ON.
MAYBE INSTEAD OF DEMONS, THOUGH, WE TRY HUMANS WITH STRONG MAGIC. NOT BEIN' ABLE TO BLEND IN WAS A REAL DRAWBACK, IN HINDSIGHT.
IF YOU SAY SO, MOTHER. BUT TO THINK THAT THEY CAN DO THIS... SO MUCH OF OUR LIVES GONE IN ONE DAY...
THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY. THERE'S JUST GOT TO, THAT'S ALL.
MAYHAP THERE IS. I CHARTED THE BEST COURSE I KNEW. BUT YOU TWO ARE BEYOND ME, MY LOVES. MIGHT BE YOU CAN FIGURE OUT SOMETHING I CAN'T.
I WISH YOU LUCK, I TRULY DO.
NOW TAKE A LAST LOOK. DRAW THE PAIN INTO YOUR HEARTS. LET IT LIVE THERE EVERY DAY, FESTERING AND BURNING.
AS A REMINDER OF WHAT WE'RE FIGHTIN' FOR.
AND AN INSPIRATION TO DO BETTER NEXT TIME.

RECENTLY.
YOU KEEP MENTIONING *EVOLUTION*, MR...
JUST "TWILIGHT" IS FINE.
WHATEVER. THE POINT IS, IF WE'RE GOING TO WORK WITH YOU, WE NEED TO KNOW PRECISELY WHAT YOU MEAN.
I CAN'T REVEAL THE DETAILS OF HOW, BUT... THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT IS ENDING.
THE MOST SUITABLE CANDIDATES WILL ENTER A NEW UNIVERSE, WHERE MAGIC AND SCIENCE, DEMON AND ANGEL, DARK AND LIGHT MERGE. TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW.
DOES THAT SOUND LIKE SOMETHING YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN?
IT DOES. IT REALLY, REALLY DOES.
JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR. YOU'LL HAVE TO GO UP AGAINST SOME POWERFUL, DEADLY OPPOSITION.
AND THERE WILL BE BLOOD.
WHAT'S THE DOWNSIDE?

TODAY.
ALL THAT TIME WASTED.
WE ARE SO SORRY... SO SORRY WE FAILED YOU.
HUSH UP, CHILD. YOU DIDN'T FAIL ME.
YOU TRIED. IT DIDN'T WORK. SO YOU GOT UP, DUSTED YOURSELVES OFF, AND TRIED AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT LIFE'S ABOUT.
GLY
BUT IT'S BECAUSE OF US MAGIC ENDED. BECAUSE OF US YOU'RE GOING TO...
...GOING TO D-DIE.

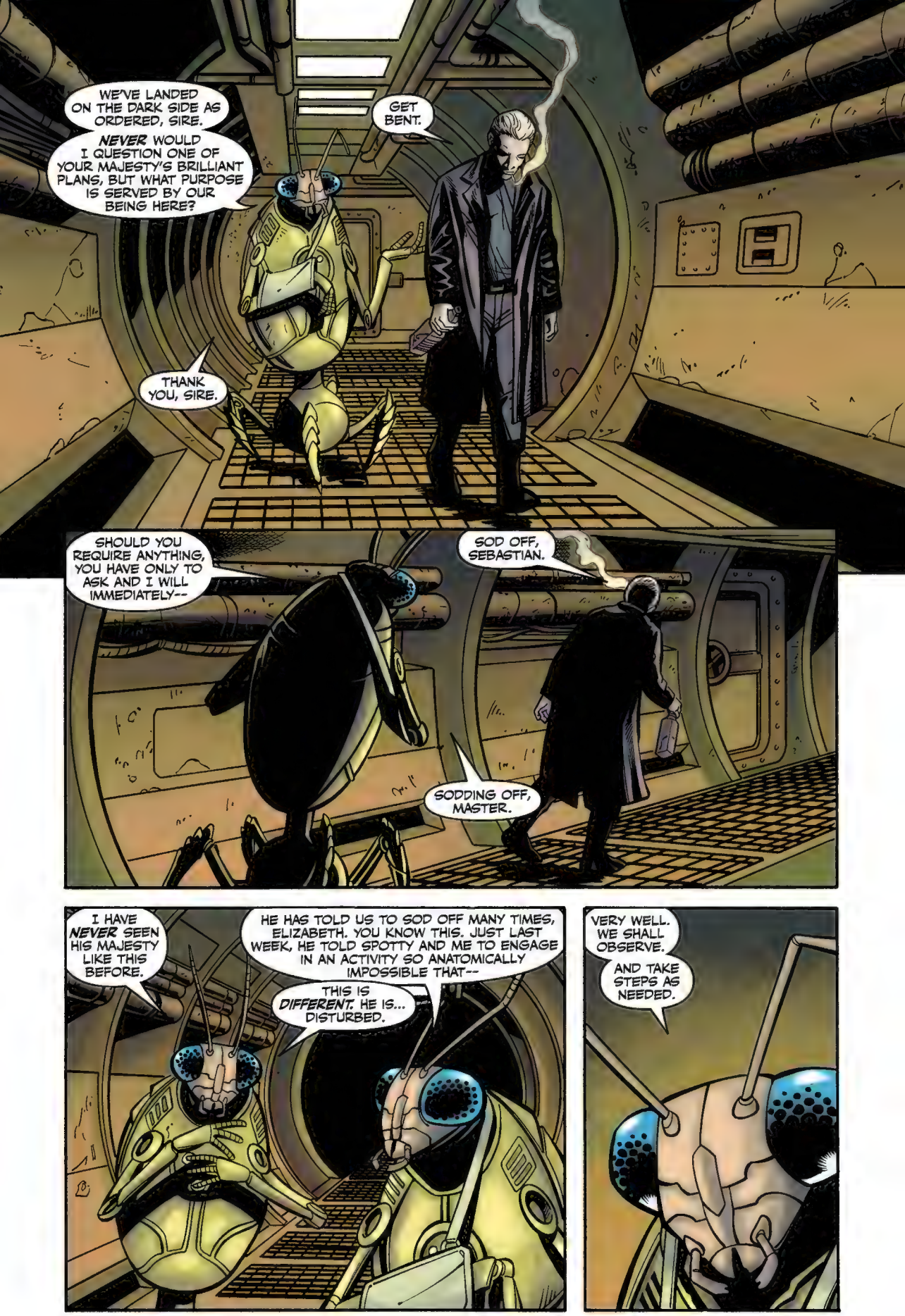

IT AIN'T EITHER. A HUNDRED YEARS OF SMOKIN', DRINKIN', AND RUTTIN', I SHOULDA KEELED OVER AGES AGO.
IF ANYONE'S TO BLAME, IT'S THAT TWILIGHT FELLA. I TOLD YOU TO BE CAREFUL OF HIM. SOMEONE SO POWERFUL, NEW ON THE SCENE? I SMELLED A RAT FROM THE GET-GO.
BUT NOW YOU'RE IN GOOD COMPANY. THE WHISTLER'S BEEN A LEGEND SINCE THE OLD TIMES. HE'S STRONGER'N ANYONE KNOWS. WITH HIM ON YOUR SIDE, YOU'RE GONNA FULFILL YOUR PURPOSE AT LAST.
WE WANTED YOU TO SEE IT. WHAT YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD FOR, FINALLY COMING TO PASS.
DON'T NEED TO. IT'S ENOUGH FOR ME TO KNOW MY KIDS ARE GONNA MAKE GOOD.
NOW GET ON WITH IT. I DON'T WANNA SPEND MY LAST FEW DAYS IN THIS HELLACIOUS PAIN.
SSH. SHE'S RIGHT. WE'RE GOING TO DO IT. FOR HER.
ANGEL WAS RIGHT TOO. THERE WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE BLOOD.
SALVATION AND REVENGE.
I SCARCELY KNOW WHICH I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE.
End

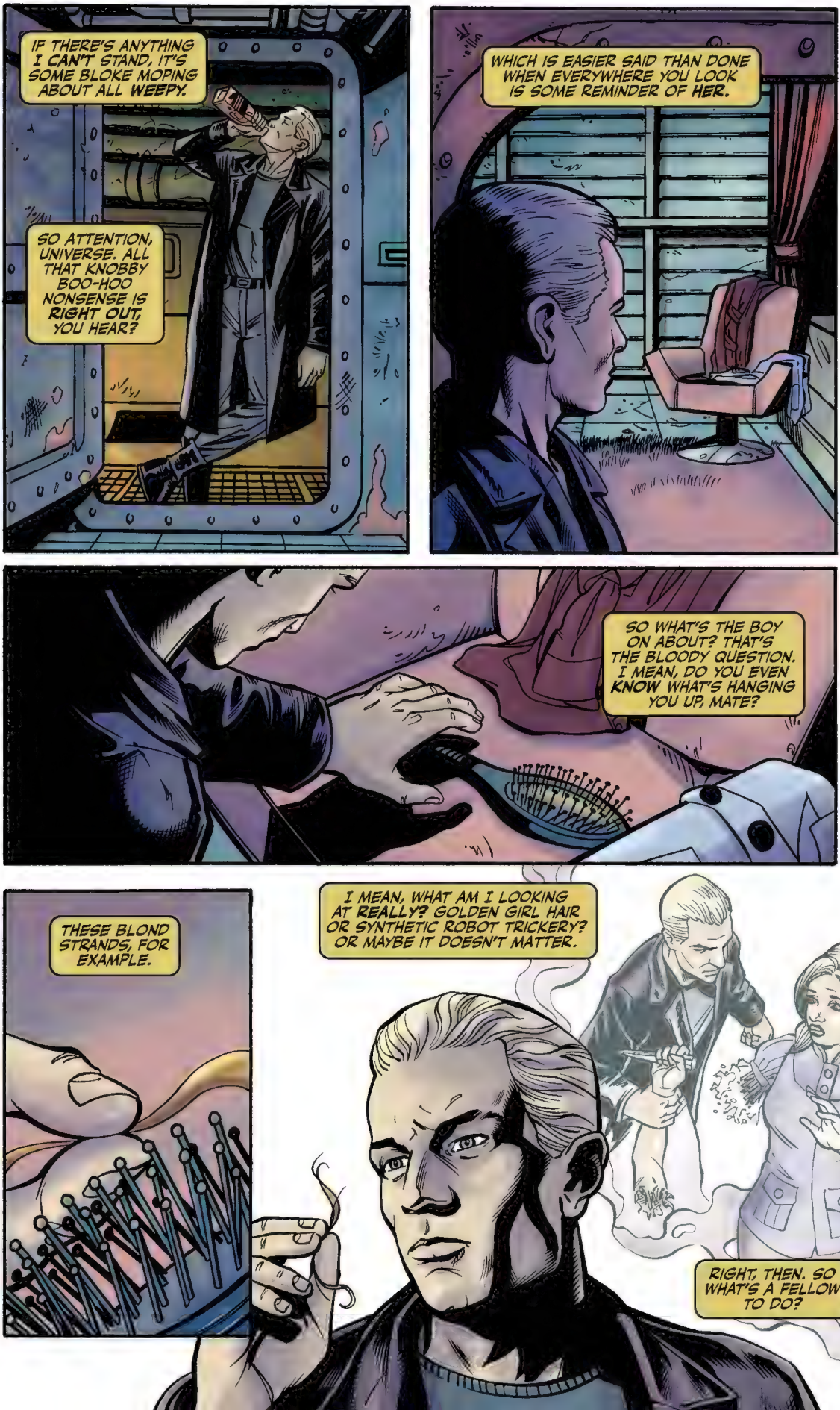




A DARK PLACE

PART 1 OF 5


WE'VE LANDED ON THE DARK SIDE AS ORDERED, SIRE.
NEVER WOULD I QUESTION ONE OF YOUR MAJESTY'S BRILLIANT PLANS, BUT WHAT PURPOSE IS SERVED BY OUR BEING HERE?
GET BENT.
THANK YOU, SIRE.
SHOULD YOU REQUIRE ANYTHING, YOU HAVE ONLY TO ASK AND I WILL IMMEDIATELY--
SOD OFF, SEBASTIAN.
SODDING OFF, MASTER.
I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIS MAJESTY LIKE THIS BEFORE.
HE HAS TOLD US TO SOD OFF MANY TIMES, ELIZABETH. YOU KNOW THIS. JUST LAST WEEK, HE TOLD SPOTTY AND ME TO ENGAGE IN AN ACTIVITY SO ANATOMICALLY IMPOSSIBLE THAT--
THIS IS DIFFERENT. HE IS... DISTURBED.
VERY WELL. WE SHALL OBSERVE.
AND TAKE STEPS AS NEEDED.


IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN'T STAND, IT'S SOME BLOKE MOPING ABOUT ALL WEEPY.
SO ATTENTION, UNIVERSE. ALL THAT KNOBBY BOO-HOO NONSENSE IS RIGHT OUT, YOU HEAR?
WHICH IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE WHEN EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK IS SOME REMINDER OF HER.
SO WHAT'S THE BOY ON ABOUT? THAT'S THE BLOODY QUESTION. I MEAN, DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT'S HANGING YOU UP, MATE?
THESE BLOND STRANDS, FOR EXAMPLE.
I MEAN, WHAT AM I LOOKING AT REALLY? GOLDEN GIRL HAIR OR SYNTHETIC ROBOT TRICKERY? OR MAYBE IT DOESN'T MATTER.
RIGHT, THEN. SO WHAT'S A FELLOW TO DO?

THE SOLARIUM WAS GOING TO BE HER PLACE. A PLACE OF LIGHT.
I DON'T WANT TO BE THE DARK PLACE YOU RUN TO WHEN THINGS AREN'T WORKING.
IT'LL ALWAYS BE DARKNESS FOR ME, LUV. MY SORT CAN'T TAKE THE LIGHT, CAN THEY?
SEBASTIAN, WE MUST CONFER. THIS SITUATION IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE.

WHAT TROUBLES YOU, ELIZABETH?
HIS MAJESTY SPIKE IS IN A STATE THAT MAKES HIM UNFIT TO BE OUR SUPREME LEADER. WE *MUST* TAKE ACTION.
HOW *DARE* YOU!
IT IS NOT FOR *YOU* TO QUESTION HIS SUPREME HIGHNESS.
IT IS *NOT* JUST *ME* WHO QUESTIONS.
WHO ARE THESE OTHER MALCONTENTS? LET THEM COME FORWARD AND--
OH.
VERY WELL.
STEPS WILL BE TAKEN!

WE MUST TALK, MASTER.
THOUGHT I MADE IT CLEAR I WASN'T IN THE MOOD.
WE HAVE NOTICED YOUR OBSESSION WITH DARKNESS, SIRE, AND YOUR BROODING IS ENTERING AN UNHEALTHY PHASE.
THE FEELING AMONG THE CREW IS THAT IN YOUR CURRENT CONDITION YOU ARE UNFIT FOR LEADERSHIP.
IN FACT... STEPS MUST BE TAKEN.
WHAT THE... STEPS MUST BE...
YOU'VE GONE BUGGY, BUG.
YOU HAVE BEEN TOO LONG IN DARKNESS.

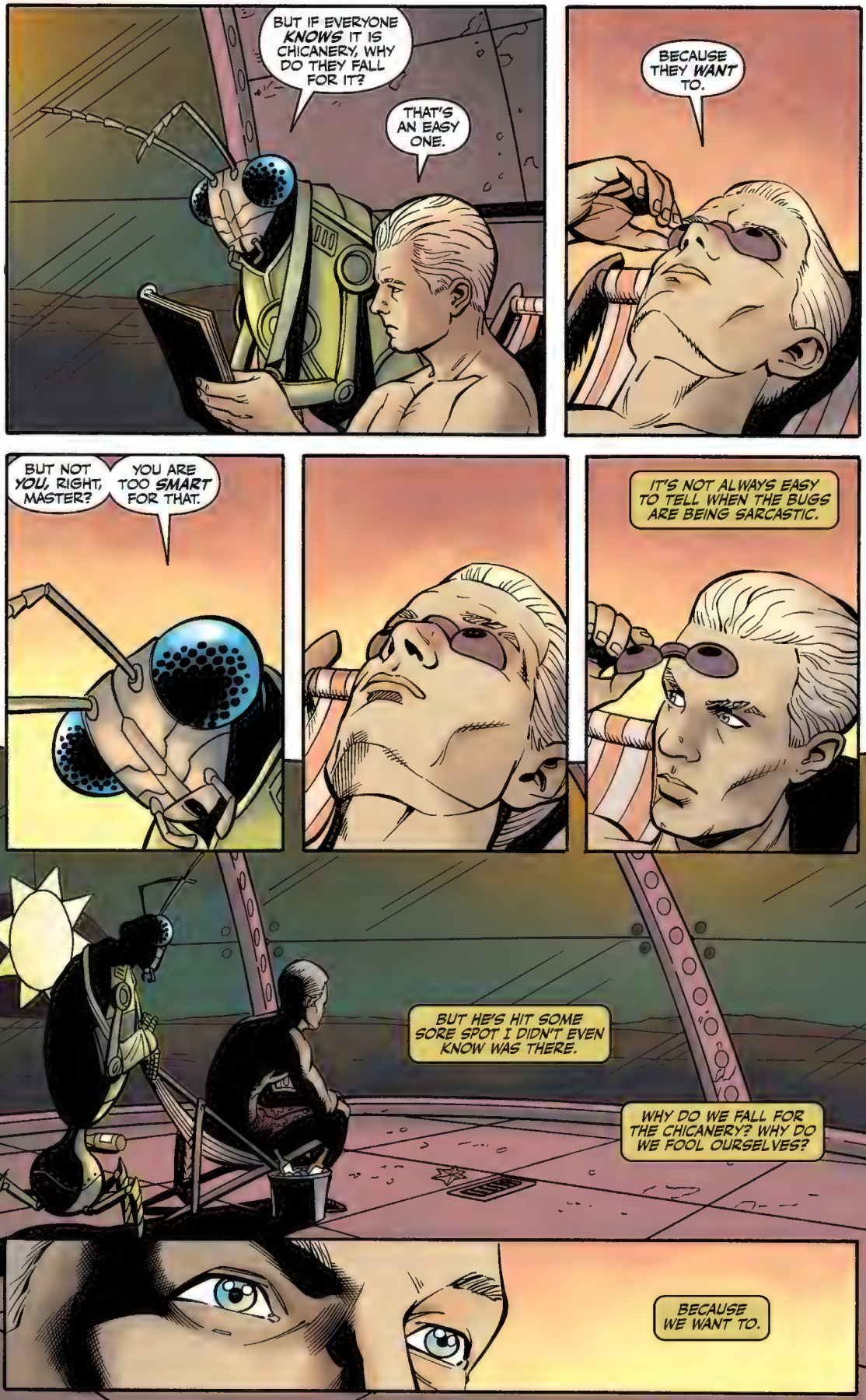
"OI, THE SHIP'S MOVING. WHERE WE GOING?"
BACK TO THE LIGHT.
I DIDN'T GIVE ANY BLOODY ORDERS TO BLOODY LIFT OFF!
I DID.
YOU ORDERED--?!
I THINK YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHO THE MASTER IS AROUND HERE.
HELLO.

HEY!
WHAT THE--?! DID I SCORE THE WINNING GOAL FOR MANCHESTER UNITED?
OPEN THE SOLARIUM WINDOWS!
UH, FELLAS, YOU KNOW ME AND THE BIG BRIGHT DON'T GET ALONG.
FELLAS?! COME ON, NOW. DIDN'T WE HAVE A GOOD THING GOING?
STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO RESTORE THE NATURAL ORDER.
HOLD ON... WAIT JUST A--

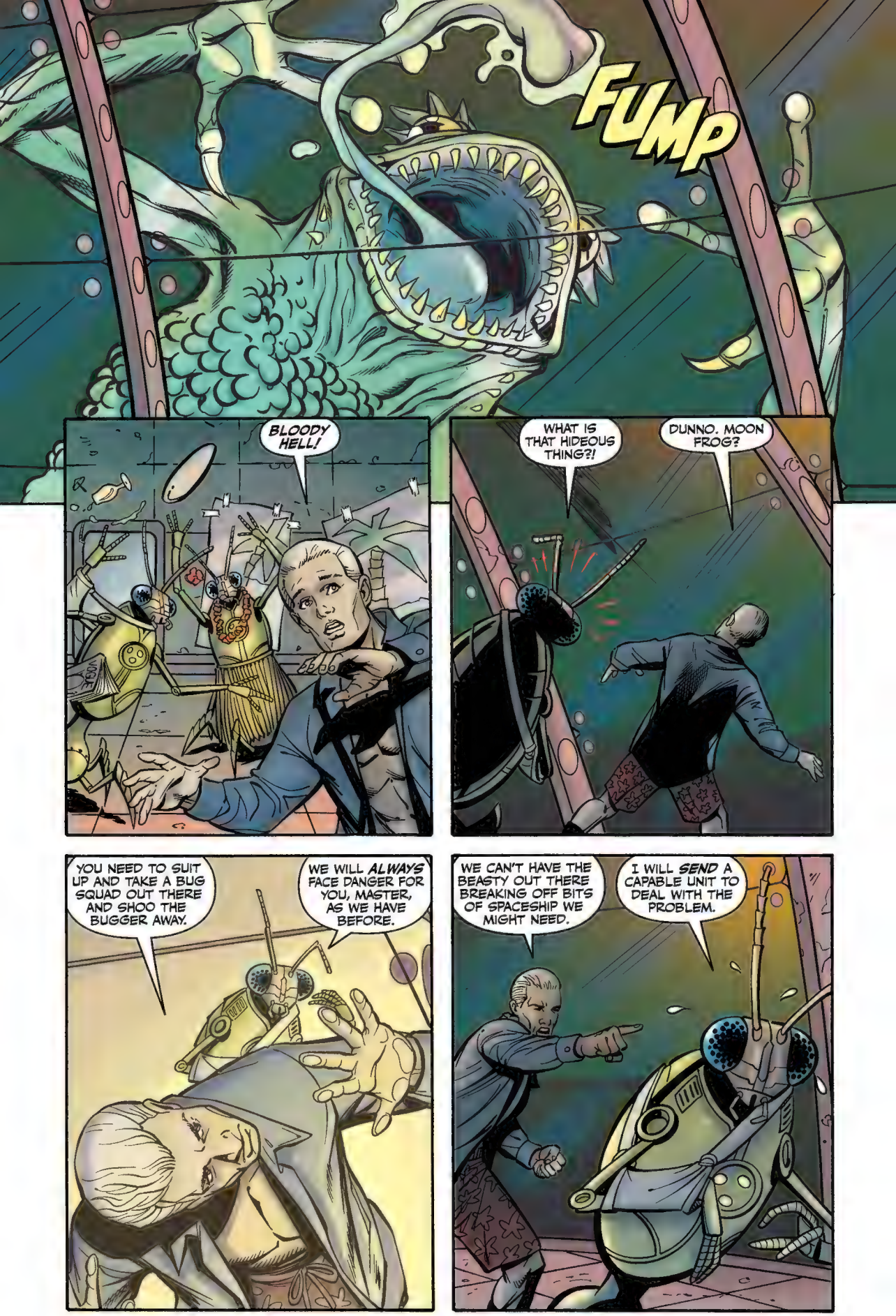
"NOOOOOO!"
"IT IS WITH DEEP HUMILITY AND UTTER EMBARRASSMENT THAT I HUMBLY AND ABJECTLY APOLOGIZE, MASTER."

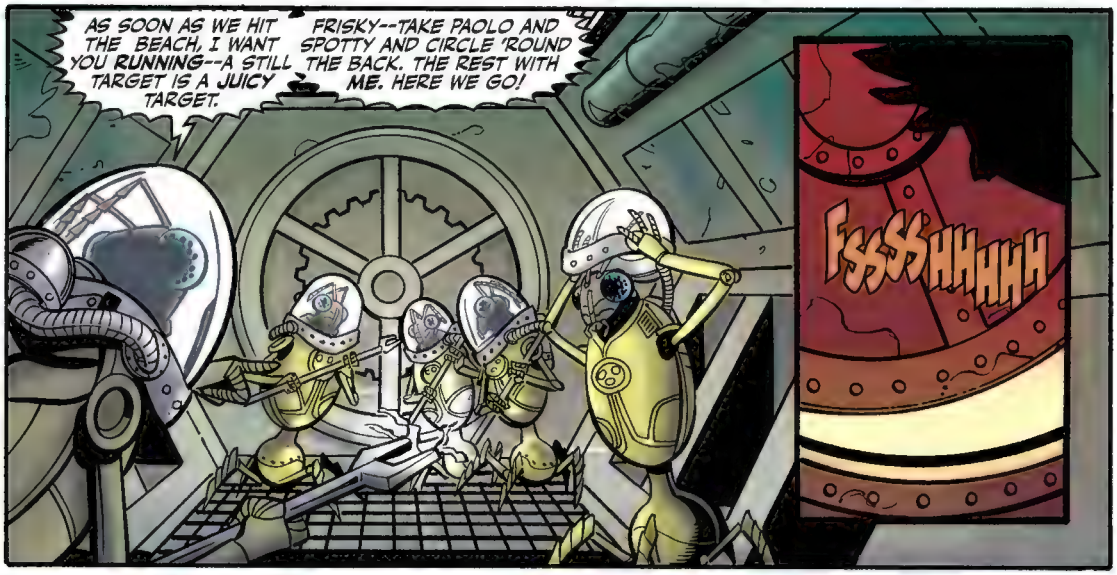
I SUBMIT MYSELF FOR DISCIPLINE. PLEASE PUNISH ME, SIRE.
SQUISH ME WITH YOUR BOOT OF JUSTICE!
RELAX, SEBASTIAN. IT'S FINE.
BUT YOU CRAWLIES DID HAVE ME WORRIED THERE FOR A MOMENT. THOUGHT YOU'D GONE ALL MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY.

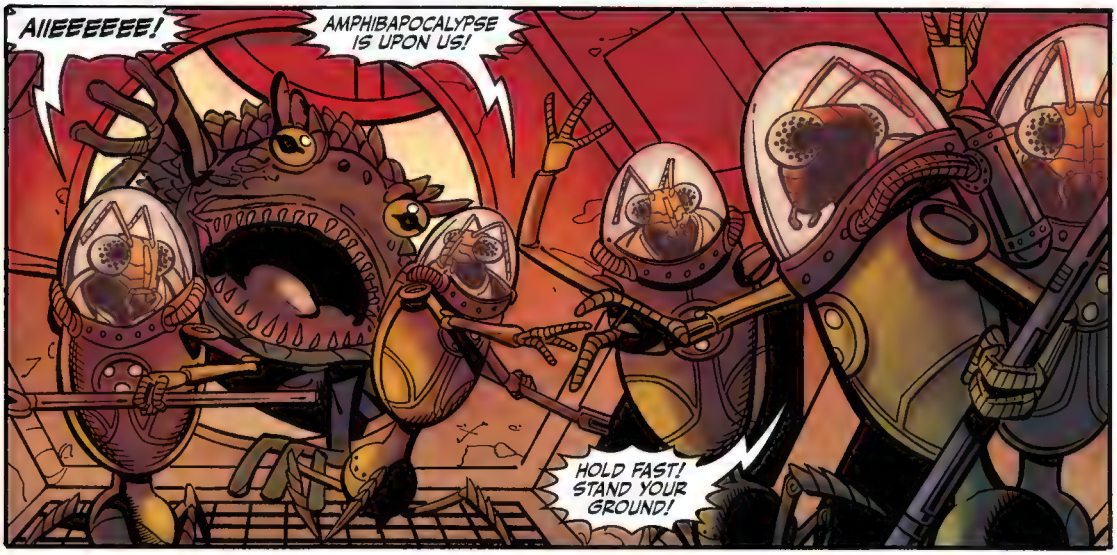
I SEE NOW IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO ALERT YOU WE HAD RECONFIGURED THE SOLARIUM WITH NECROTEMPERED GLASS TO FILTER OUT THE SPECTRUM OF SUNLIGHT HARMFUL TO VAMPIRES.
MMMM-HMMM.
IT'S JUST THAT THE CREW AND I FELT YOU WERE PLUNGING DEEP INTO A--IF THIS IS THE CORRECT SLANG-- A FUNK. A DARK FUNK.
AND YOU THOUGHT A BIT OF BEACH BLANKET BINGO WAS THE PRESCRIPTION TO GET SPIKE RIGHT AGAIN, EH?
A LITTLE CORNY, BUT NOT ALTOGETHER UNPLEASANT.
WE USED THIS AS A GUIDE, FROM A PERIODICAL MISS BUFFY LEFT BEHIND. IT APPEARS SUNNY AND RESTFUL.
MADISON AVENUE TRIPE, SEB, DESIGNED TO DUPE THE SLACK-JAWED MASSES INTO THINKING A SIX-PACK OF COLD SUDS CAN NUMB THEM FROM THEIR DREARY LIVES.
EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT.

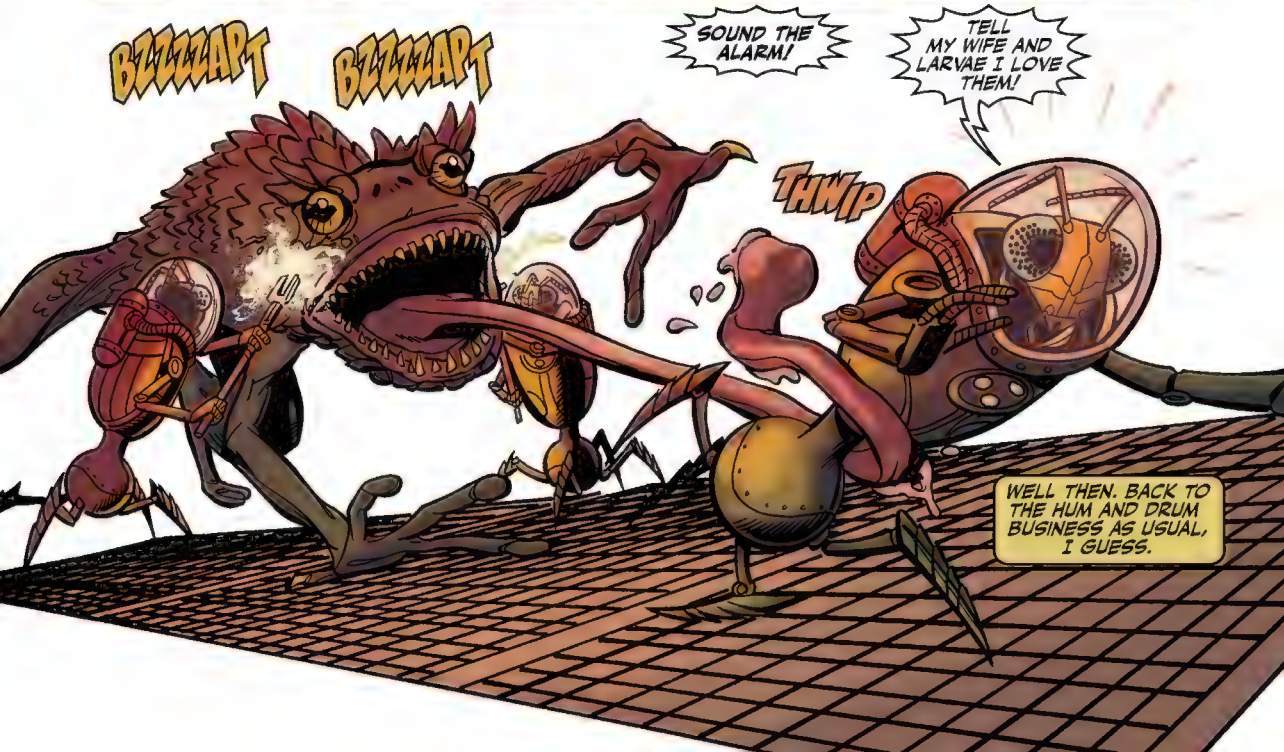

BUT IF EVERYONE KNOWS IT IS CHICANERY, WHY DO THEY FALL FOR IT?
THAT'S AN EASY ONE.
BECAUSE THEY WANT TO.
BUT NOT YOU, RIGHT, MASTER?
YOU ARE TOO SMART FOR THAT.
IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO TELL WHEN THE BUGS ARE BEING SARCASTIC.
BUT HE'S HIT SOME SORE SPOT I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WAS THERE.
WHY DO WE FALL FOR THE CHICANERY? WHY DO WE FOOL OURSELVES?
BECAUSE WE WANT TO.

RIGHT, THEN. IT'S GOT TO GO. THE WHOLE LOT. OUT WITH IT.
BUT...BUT...IS NOT THE LIGHT WARM AND COMFORTING?
YOU'VE GOT A CARDBOARD SUN HERE, SEB.
AND A PROPER BEACH IS NEAR THE SEA. SPLASH AND FROLIC. ALL THAT.
SHALL WE MOVE THE SHIP TO THE SEA OF TRANQUILITY?
TELL US WHAT YOU WISH, MASTER. HOW MAY WE SERVE YOU?
UH-OH.
WE'RE NOT GOING BACK TO THE DARK SIDE, ARE WE, SIRE?
YEAH, WELL, IT MAY NOT BE BRIGHT AND SHINY, BUT AT LEAST IT'S BELIEVABLE.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, YOU CAN--
HANG ON. DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
I HEAR ONLY THE CACOPHONOUS CLAMOR OF MY OWN FAILURE.
HUH.


FUMP
BLOODY HELL!
WHAT IS THAT HIDEOUS THING?!
DUNNO. MOON FROG?
YOU NEED TO SUIT UP AND TAKE A BUG SQUAD OUT THERE AND SHOO THE BUGGER AWAY.
WE WILL ALWAYS FACE DANGER FOR YOU, MASTER, AS WE HAVE BEFORE.
WE CAN'T HAVE THE BEASTY OUT THERE BREAKING OFF BITS OF SPACESHIP WE MIGHT NEED.
I WILL SEND A CAPABLE UNIT TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM.


AS SOON AS WE HIT THE BEACH, I WANT YOU RUNNING--A STILL TARGET IS A JUICY TARGET.
FRISKY--TAKE PAOLO AND SPOTTY AND CIRCLE 'ROUND THE BACK. THE REST WITH ME. HERE WE GO!
FSSSSHHHHH


AIIEEEEEE!
AMPHIBAPOCALYPSE IS UPON US!
HOLD FAST! STAND YOUR GROUND!


BZZZZAPT
BZZZZAPT
SOUND THE ALARM!
TELL MY WIFE AND LARVAE I LOVE THEM!
THWIP
WELL THEN. BACK TO THE HUM AND DRUM BUSINESS AS USUAL, I GUESS.

FACT IS I QUITE LIKED THE FAKE BEACH.
BUT NOBODY LIKES FEELING SUCKERED.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT BUFFY WAS PREGNANT AND I COULD TAKE CARE OF HER AND MAYBE WE COULD PLAY AT A NORMAL LIFE.
TALK ABOUT FOOLING YOURSELF.
IS THERE ANY CLEARER SIGN YOU'VE BECOME A BORING GIT THAN BEING PITIED BY THE BUGS?
RIGHT THEN. TIME TO GET MY HEAD OUT OF MY BUM AND--
BREEP BREEP BREEP
NOW WHAT?

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
WHOA! WHAT'S WITH THE STAMPEDE, INSECTS?
ALL IS LOST! IT IS THE PROPHECY! THE NIGHT OF THE LONG TONGUES!
RUN, MASTER SPIKE! THE FROG DEMON IS--
THWIP
AAARGHH
HEY! NOBODY EATS MY BUGS!
BRRIBBBIT

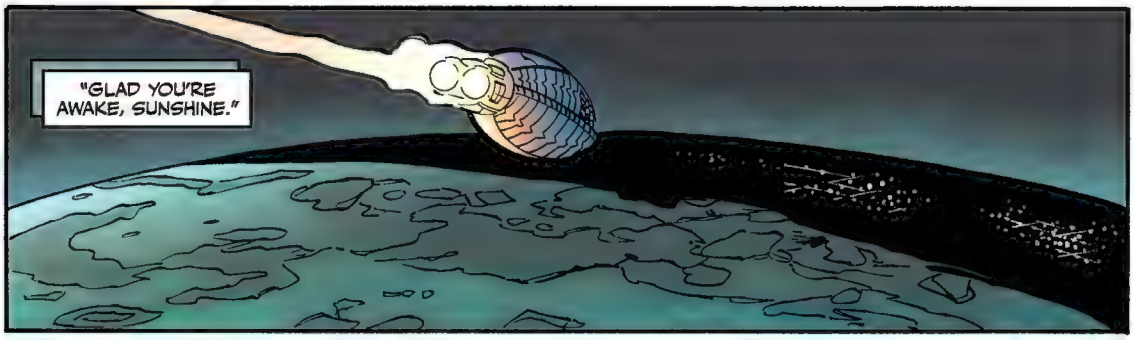
FIRST OFF... GROSS.
SECOND...
THWIP
I HOPE YOU LIKE SPICY FOOD.
SSSSS
GAAAK
BAP
KRASH

SO YOU LIKE IT ROUGH, EH, KERMIT?
RIGHT.
THWIP
CHRINK
BRAAAAP
SWASH
WHAP
NOW TO SEND YOU BACK TO THAT LILY PAD IN HELL WHERE YOU CAME--

WHAM
OUCH.
SORRY 'BOUT THAT, BLONDIE, BUT WE NEED YOUR SHIP.
WE *DON'T* NEED *YOU.*
GRRR

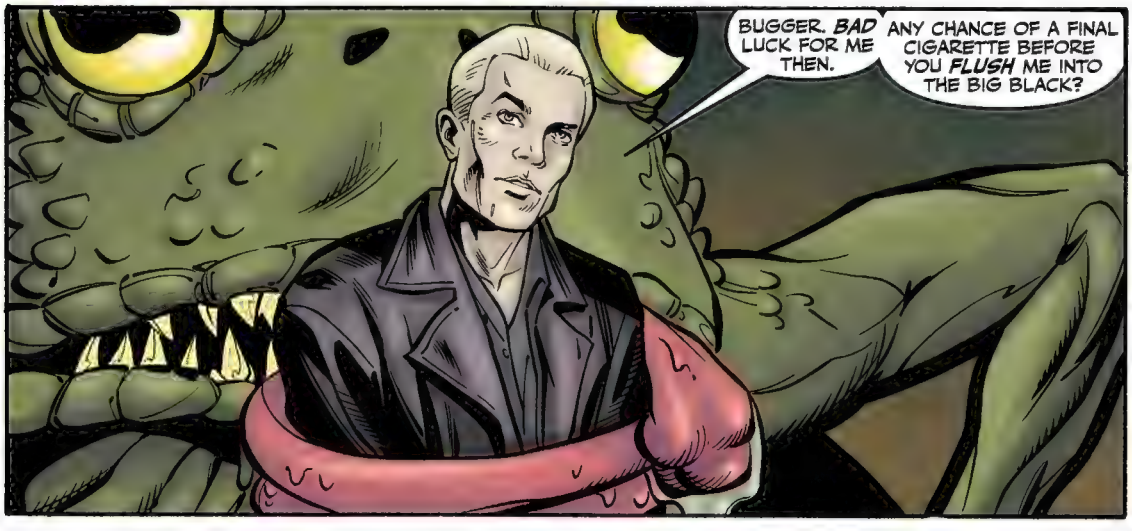
WHAP
SLAMM
OOF
BAP
THWIP
FWAP
WAM
GOOD. THAT'LL LEARN THE BLOODSUCKER TO MESS WITH US.
BRING HIM.

OKAY, WHICH ONE OF YOU COCKROACHES IS IN CHARGE OF THIS HEAP?
$#%€!
THEN CRANK UP THIS TIN CAN NOW. I WANT LIFTOFF IN SIXTY SECONDS.
THEN ONCE WE'RE IN SPACE...
...WE'LL JETTISON THE DEAD WEIGHT.

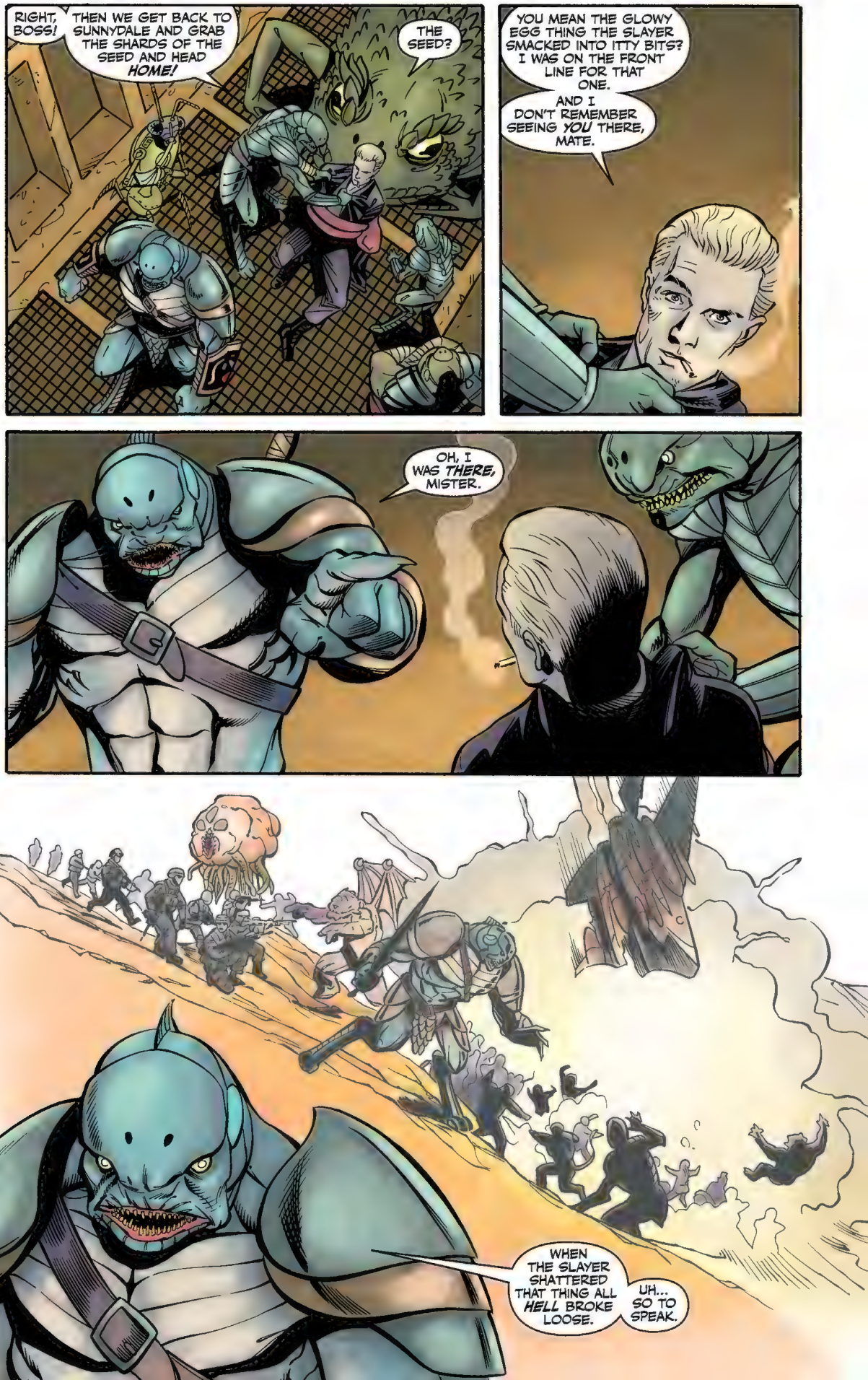


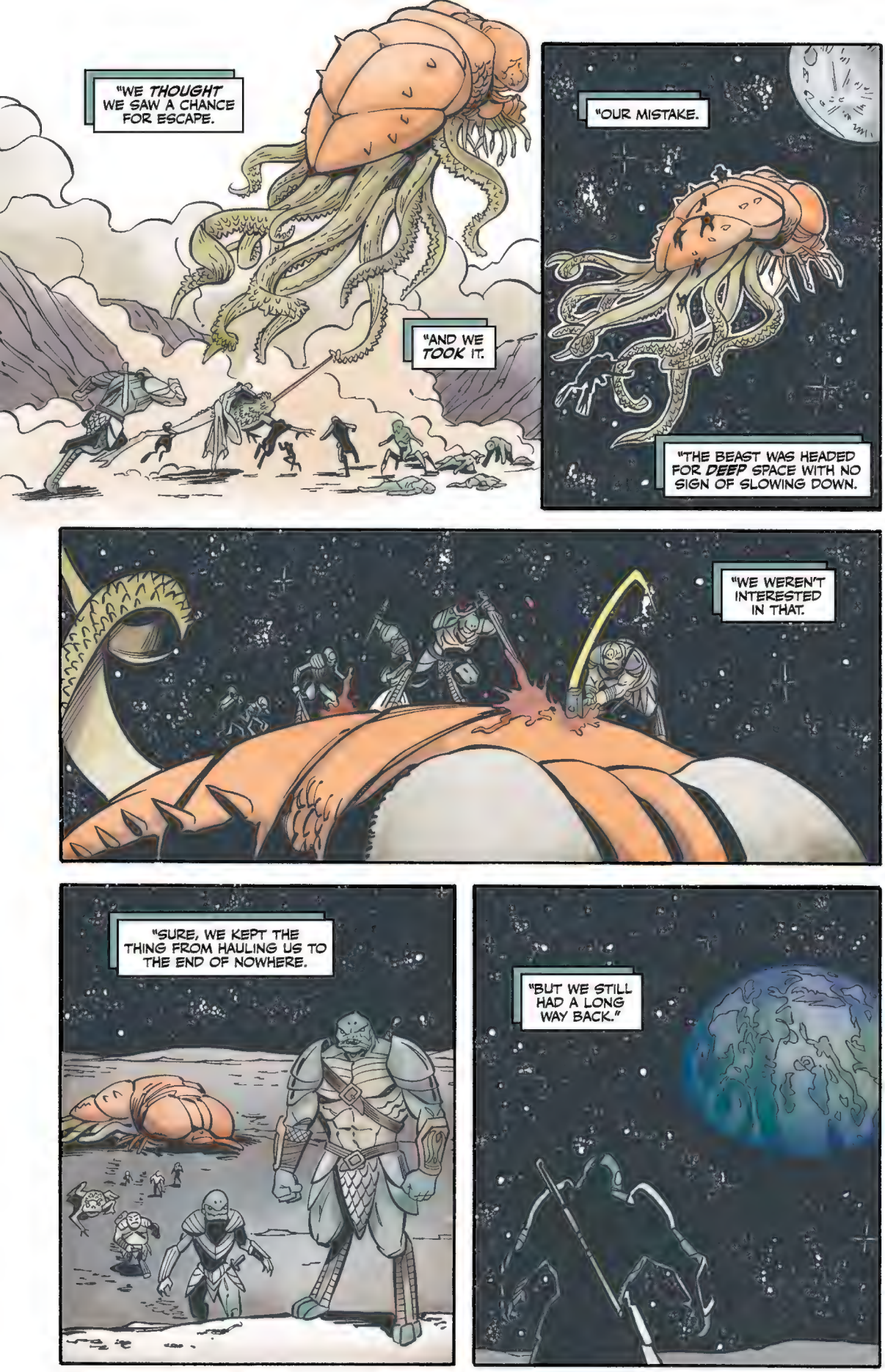
A DARK PLACE

PART 2 OF 5

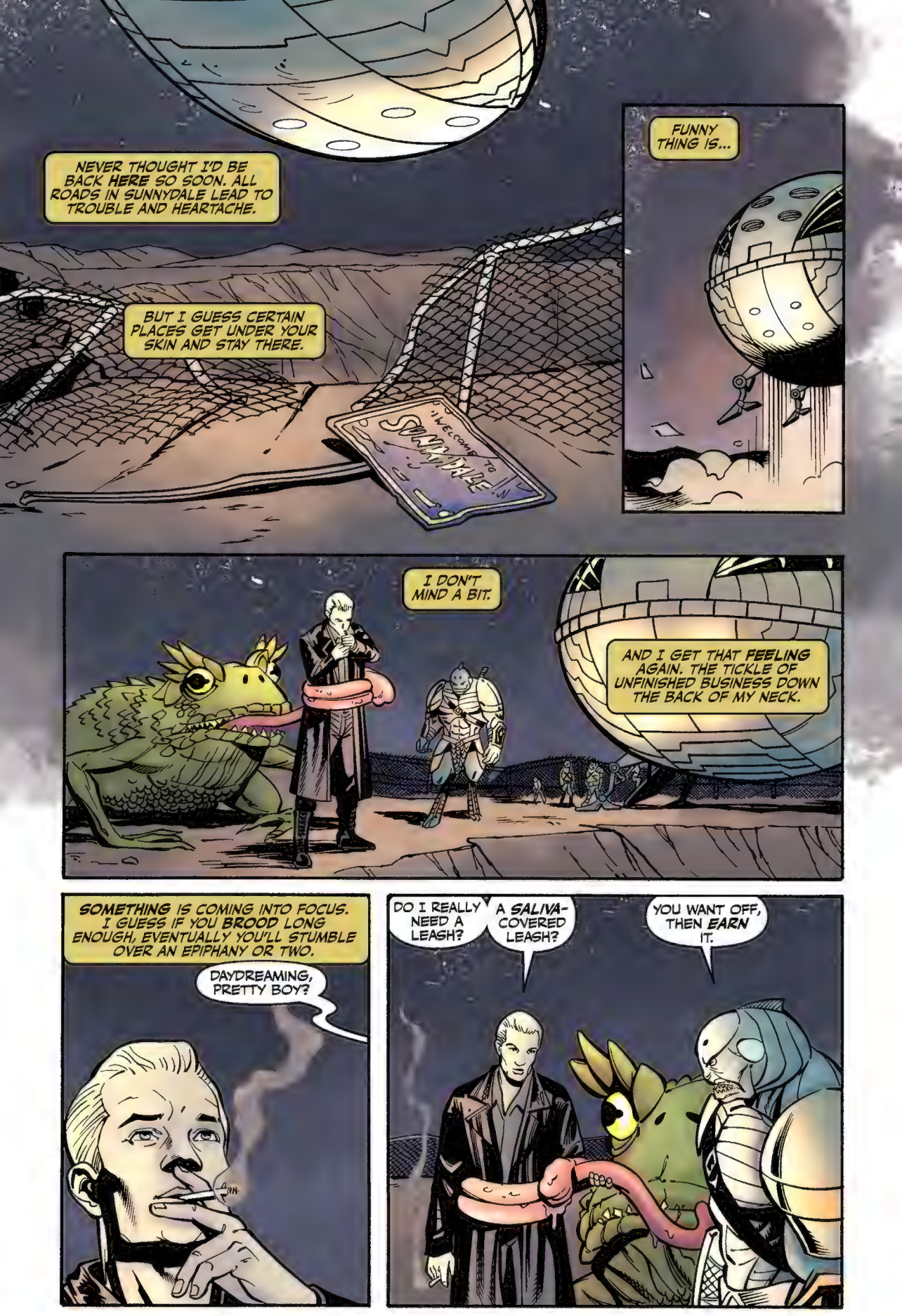


WHY NOT?
IT HAPPENS THAT YOU'RE CATCHING ME AND THE BOYS IN A GOOD MOOD.
ROUGHING UP BUGS *HALF* YOUR SIZE PUTS YOU IN GOOD SPIRITS, DOES IT?
NOT THAT ANYONE WILL *CARE* OR LISTEN, BUT IF YOU'VE GOT LAST WORDS, THEN *NOW'S* THE TIME.
HE'S *OFFICIALLY* NOT AMUSING ANYMORE.
TOSS THE BASTARD OUT.

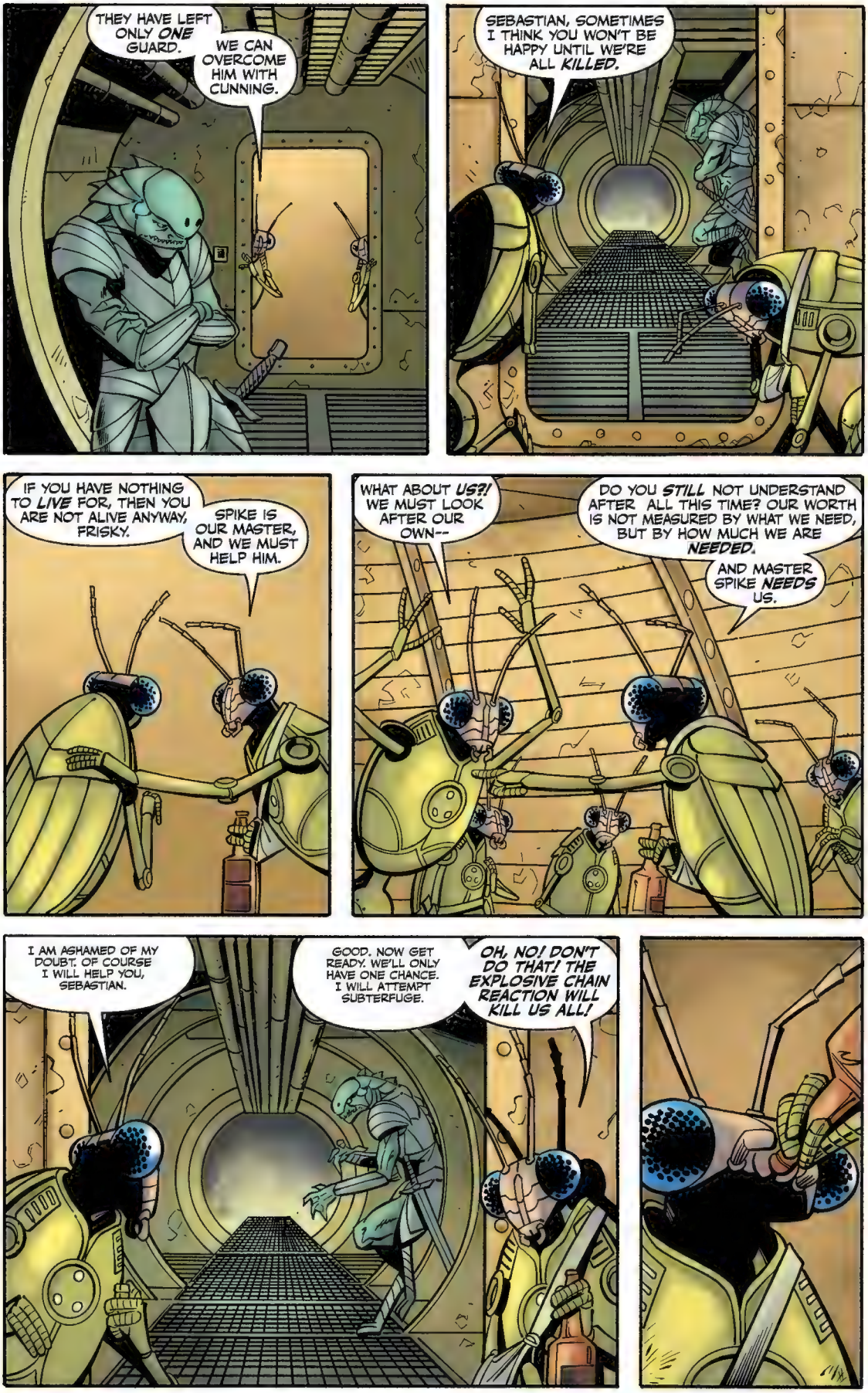

RIGHT, BOSS!
THEN WE GET BACK TO SUNNYDALE AND GRAB THE SHARDS OF THE SEED AND HEAD HOME!
THE SEED?
YOU MEAN THE GLOWY EGG THING THE SLAYER SMACKED INTO ITTY BITS? I WAS ON THE FRONT LINE FOR THAT ONE.
AND I DON'T REMEMBER SEEING YOU THERE, MATE.
OH, I WAS THERE, MISTER.
WHEN THE SLAYER SHATTERED THAT THING ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE.
UH... SO TO SPEAK.


"WE THOUGHT WE SAW A CHANCE FOR ESCAPE.
"AND WE TOOK IT.
"OUR MISTAKE.
"THE BEAST WAS HEADED FOR DEEP SPACE WITH NO SIGN OF SLOWING DOWN.
"WE WEREN'T INTERESTED IN THAT.
"SURE, WE KEPT THE THING FROM HAULING US TO THE END OF NOWHERE.
"BUT WE STILL HAD A LONG WAY BACK."

SO YOU WENT ALL CAPTAIN AHAB ON THE ANIMAL AND STRANDED YOURSELF.
UNTIL NOW, BLONDIE.
NOW WE HAVE YOUR SHIP AND ARE HEADED FOR THE DOORWAY BACK HOME.
I KNOW MY WAY 'ROUND THAT CRATER.
A BIG SLOBBERING STURGEON DEMON COULD WASTE A LOT OF TIME KNOCKING AROUND LOOKING FOR SHARDS WITHOUT A GUIDE.
BUT, MASTER, IF YOU REMEMBER THE SHARDS OF THE SEED ARE--
VERY HARD TO FIND, WE KNOW. LET THE GROWNUPS TALK, BUG.
SO YOU CAN OPT FOR THE VERY SHORT-LIVED PLEASURE OF SHOOTING ME INTO SPACE...
...OR I CAN SAVE YOU TIME TROMPING ABOUT BLINDLY IN A MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER THAT CRATER.


NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE BACK HERE SO SOON. ALL ROADS IN SUNNYDALE LEAD TO TROUBLE AND HEARTACHE.
BUT I GUESS CERTAIN PLACES GET UNDER YOUR SKIN AND STAY THERE.
WELCOME TO SUNNYDALE
FUNNY THING IS...
I DON'T MIND A BIT.
AND I GET THAT FEELING AGAIN. THE TICKLE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS DOWN THE BACK OF MY NECK.
SOMETHING IS COMING INTO FOCUS. I GUESS IF YOU BROOD LONG ENOUGH, EVENTUALLY YOU'LL STUMBLE OVER AN EPIPHANY OR TWO.
DAYDREAMING, PRETTY BOY?
DO I REALLY NEED A LEASH?
A SALIVA-COVERED LEASH?
YOU WANT OFF, THEN EARN IT.

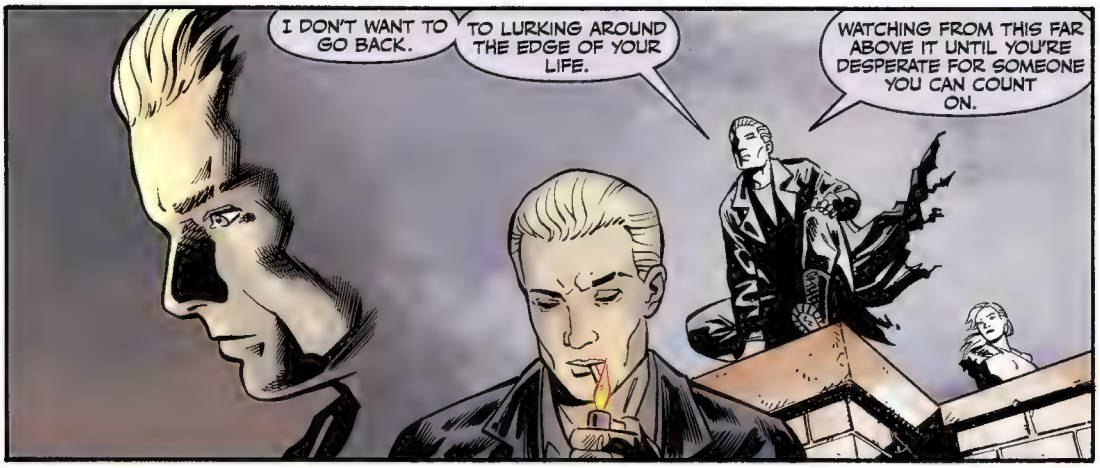
ONE DAY IT WILL JUST BE ME AND YOU, MATE. NO ENTOURAGE. NO FROGGY BODYGUARD.
PLEASE STOP. YOU'RE TERRIFYING ME.
NOW YOU CAN COOPERATE OR GET STOMPED. YOUR CALL. WE JUST WANT TO GET HOME.
OR MAYBE YOU WANDERING VAGABOND TYPES DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT.
DON'T I?
MAYBE FISH-FACE HAS A POINT. BUT I DON'T LIKE IT.
"WE MUST ESCAPE AND BRING THE MASTER HOME, FRISKY."


THEY HAVE LEFT ONLY ONE GUARD.
WE CAN OVERCOME HIM WITH CUNNING.
SEBASTIAN, SOMETIMES I THINK YOU WON'T BE HAPPY UNTIL WE'RE ALL KILLED.
IF YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LIVE FOR, THEN YOU ARE NOT ALIVE ANYWAY, FRISKY.
SPIKE IS OUR MASTER, AND WE MUST HELP HIM.
WHAT ABOUT US?! WE MUST LOOK AFTER OUR OWN--
DO YOU STILL NOT UNDERSTAND AFTER ALL THIS TIME? OUR WORTH IS NOT MEASURED BY WHAT WE NEED, BUT BY HOW MUCH WE ARE NEEDED.
AND MASTER SPIKE NEEDS US.
I AM ASHAMED OF MY DOUBT. OF COURSE I WILL HELP YOU, SEBASTIAN.
GOOD. NOW GET READY. WE'LL ONLY HAVE ONE CHANCE. I WILL ATTEMPT SUBTERFUGE.
OH, NO! DON'T DO THAT! THE EXPLOSIVE CHAIN REACTION WILL KILL US ALL!

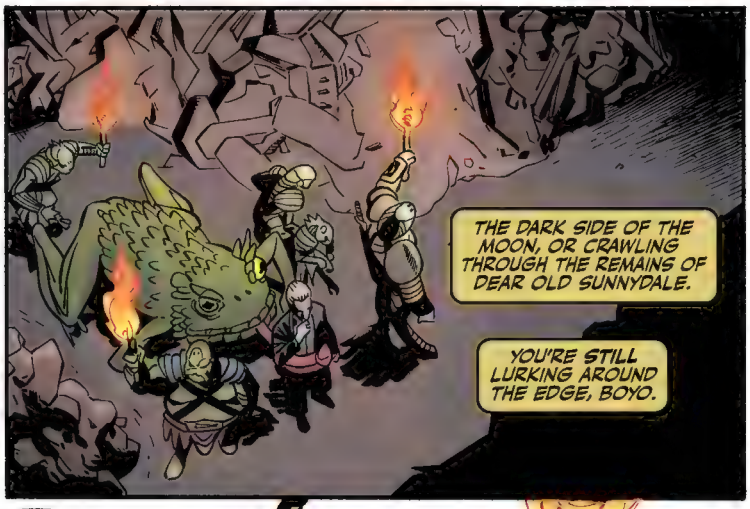
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU BUGS--?!
FWAAAASH!
AAAAIIEEEEE
STRIKE QUICKLY! HE MUST PAY FOR UNDERESTIMATING US!
YOU SEE, FRISKY, WHEN WE HELP MASTER SPIKE, WE ARE HELPING OUR OWN.
I UNDERSTAND, SEBASTIAN. BUT SOMETIMES I WONDER IF MASTER SPIKE FEELS THE SAME ABOUT US.
FAMILY.
HOME.

THOSE WORDS MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT WHEN YOU'RE WALKING AROUND WITH A SOUL BUZZING IN YOUR CHEST.
SAME WORLD. SAME PEOPLE.
BUT NOTHING'S THE SAME.
HOME. WHEN'S THE LAST TIME I HAD ONE? HIDEOUTS, SURE. LAIRS.
DARK PLACES.
SO HERE'S OUR BOY TRYING TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT IN THE STEAMING HOLE THAT USED TO BE SUNNYDALE.
ALL THIS DEBRIS USED TO BE A TOWN, PEOPLE, LIVES.
REVELL
HOME?
I THOUGHT A SOUL WOULD FREE A FELLOW. IT DOESN'T.
IT TIES YOU TO A PLACE, TO PEOPLE, IN A WAY CHAINS NEVER COULD.

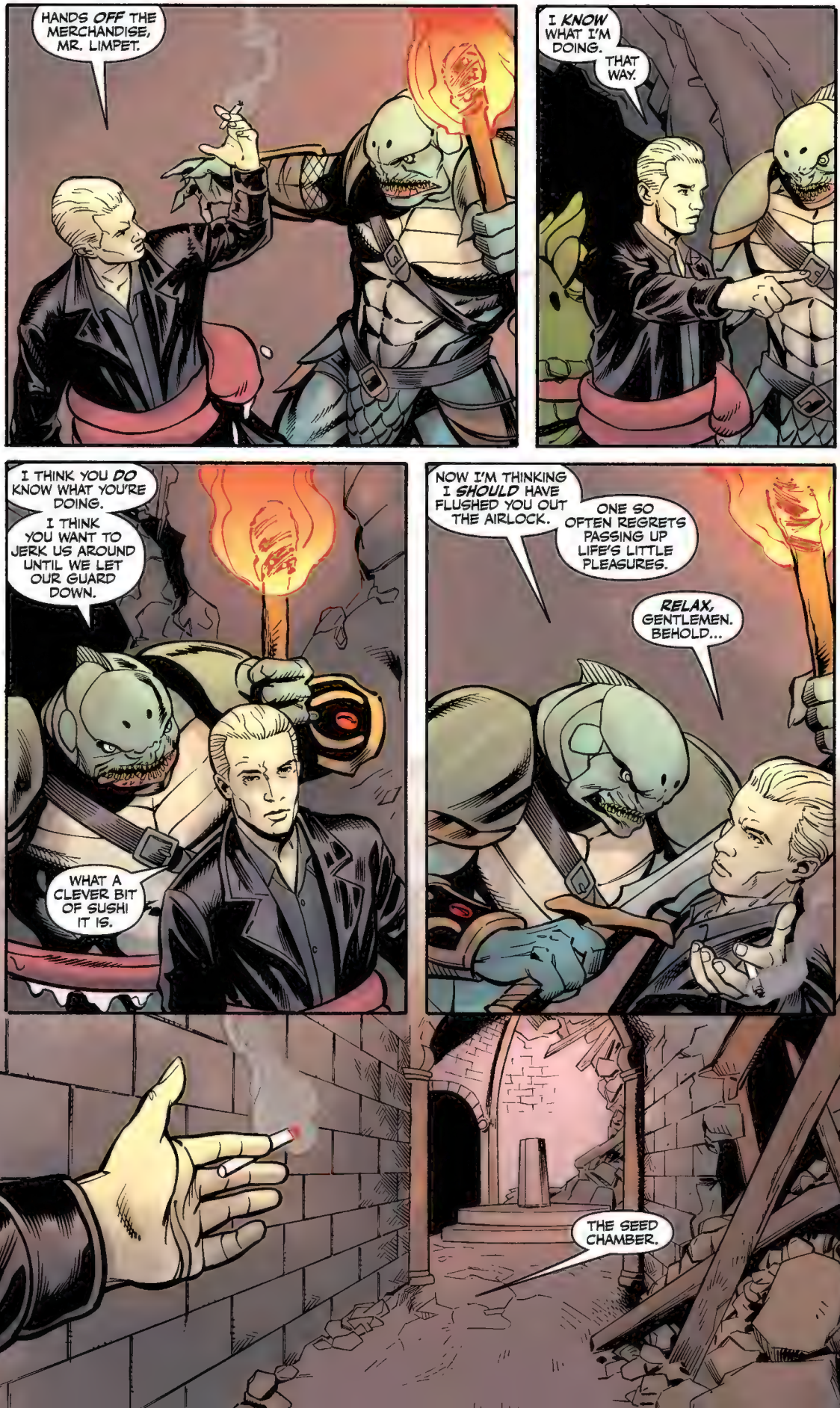
NO AMOUNT OF DISTANCE OR TIME CAN BREAK THOSE CHAINS.

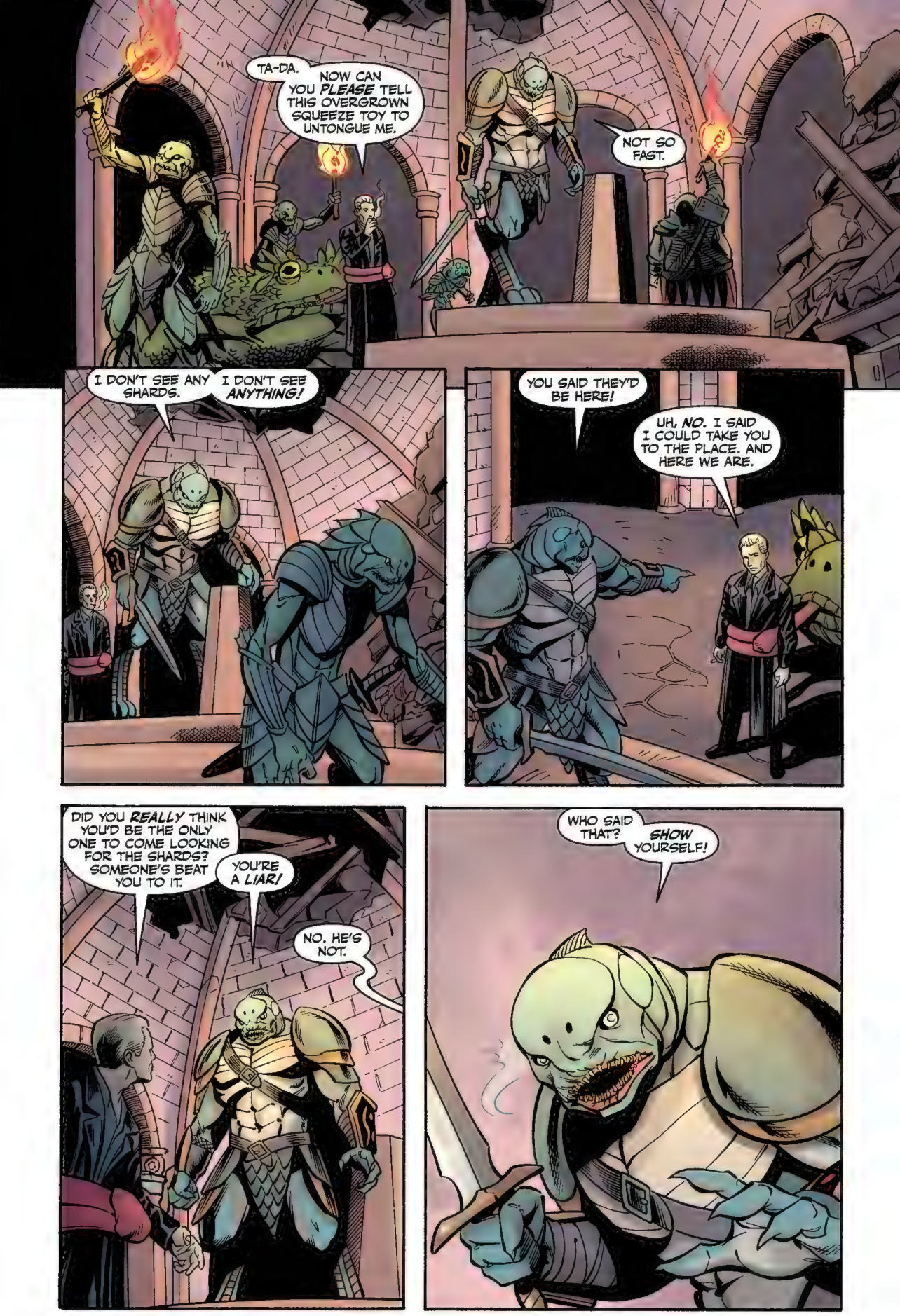

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.
TO LURKING AROUND THE EDGE OF YOUR LIFE.
WATCHING FROM THIS FAR ABOVE IT UNTIL YOU'RE DESPERATE FOR SOMEONE YOU CAN COUNT ON.

RIGHT.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE.


THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, OR CRAWLING THROUGH THE REMAINS OF DEAR OLD SUNNYDALE.
YOU'RE STILL LURKING AROUND THE EDGE, BOYO.

HEY!
ARE YOU LOST OR WHAT? I'M LOSING *PATIENCE,* BLONDIE.


HANDS OFF THE MERCHANDISE, MR. LIMPET.
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
THAT WAY.
I THINK YOU DO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
I THINK YOU WANT TO JERK US AROUND UNTIL WE LET OUR GUARD DOWN.
WHAT A CLEVER BIT OF SUSHI IT IS.
NOW I'M THINKING I SHOULD HAVE FLUSHED YOU OUT THE AIRLOCK.
ONE SO OFTEN REGRETS PASSING UP LIFE'S LITTLE PLEASURES.
RELAX, GENTLEMEN. BEHOLD...
THE SEED CHAMBER.


TA-DA.
NOW CAN YOU *PLEASE* TELL THIS OVERGROWN SQUEEZE TOY TO UNTONGUE ME.
NOT SO FAST.
I DON'T SEE ANY SHARDS.
I DON'T SEE *ANYTHING!*
YOU SAID THEY'D BE HERE!
UH, *NO.* I SAID I COULD TAKE YOU TO THE PLACE. AND HERE WE ARE.
DID YOU *REALLY* THINK YOU'D BE THE ONLY ONE TO COME LOOKING FOR THE SHARDS? SOMEONE'S BEAT YOU TO IT.
YOU'RE A *LIAR!*
NO. HE'S NOT.
WHO SAID THAT?
SHOW YOURSELF!

THE SHARDS WERE *GONE* WHEN I ARRIVED.
SO IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE ALL MADE THE TRIP FOR NOTHING.
HELLO.

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH THE SHARDS?
SOME WILL WANT THE POWER IN THOSE SHARDS, TO GIVE THEMSELVES THE ADVANTAGE IN THIS CRIPPLED WORLD.
NOT ME. I'M STRANDED.
AND I WANT TO GO HOME.
AND THAT TAKES A BIT OF MAGIC. IN A WORLD THAT'S NOT GOT ANY.
SO YOU'VE GOT TO SCROUNGE FOR LEFTOVERS.
YES.

I SUPPOSE WE WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES TO GUESS THE SHARDS MIGHT RETAIN SOME RESIDUAL POWER.
NO! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
MAYBE YOU GOT HERE FIRST AND YOU HAVE THE SHARDS.
MAYBE YOU'RE HOLDING OUT ON US!
ENOUGH BULL$#!%!
KILL 'EM BOTH!
MEN. ALWAYS WANT TO DO IT THE HARD WAY.

KRAAARRRR
OOF
THIS IS GOING TO STING, FROGGY-- SORRY.
SWAK
BRAAAPT
FWAP

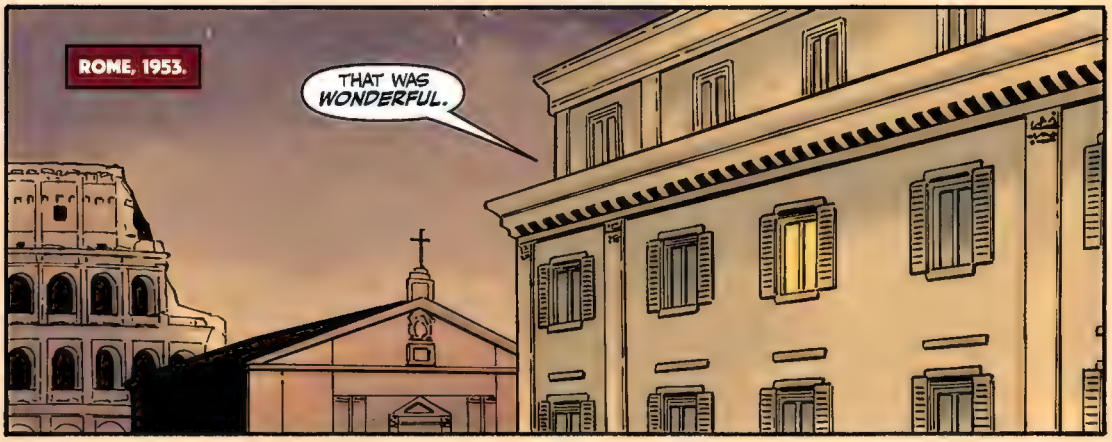
GRRRRR
SKWICH
BRRRRAAAAP
BZZZZZZT
BZZZZZZT
NO MERCY!
GREAT. NOW I HAVE TO FIGHT DEMONS AND WATCH OUT FOR YOU LOT.
NO, MASTER. WE ARE HERE TO WATCH OUT FOR YOU.

WHAP
NICE TRY, SUCCUBUS!
BAM
BUT I AM THE BATTLE CHIEF OF THE FIGHTING DEMON STURGEONS.
KRAK
AND NOW I FINALLY GET TO KILL SOMETHING.
GAAAH
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER, MATE.
I WOULD HAVE REGRETTED PASSING UP THIS LITTLE PLEASURE.

SWAK
MAYBE NOW'S A GOOD TIME FOR YOU TO TELL ME WHO YOU ARE.
MORGAN. AND YOU ARE...?
THE FELLOW ASKING THE QUESTIONS.
WHOEVER YOU ARE, THANKS. FOR SAVING ME.
SAVE YOU? WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT. THE DEADLIEST CATCH HITS, YOU HIT BACK. THAT'S JUST THE MATH.
WELL. THANKS ANYWAY.
NAME'S SPIKE.
WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER WAS TRUE, SPIKE. SOMEBODY BEAT US HERE. LOTS OF SOMEBODIES.

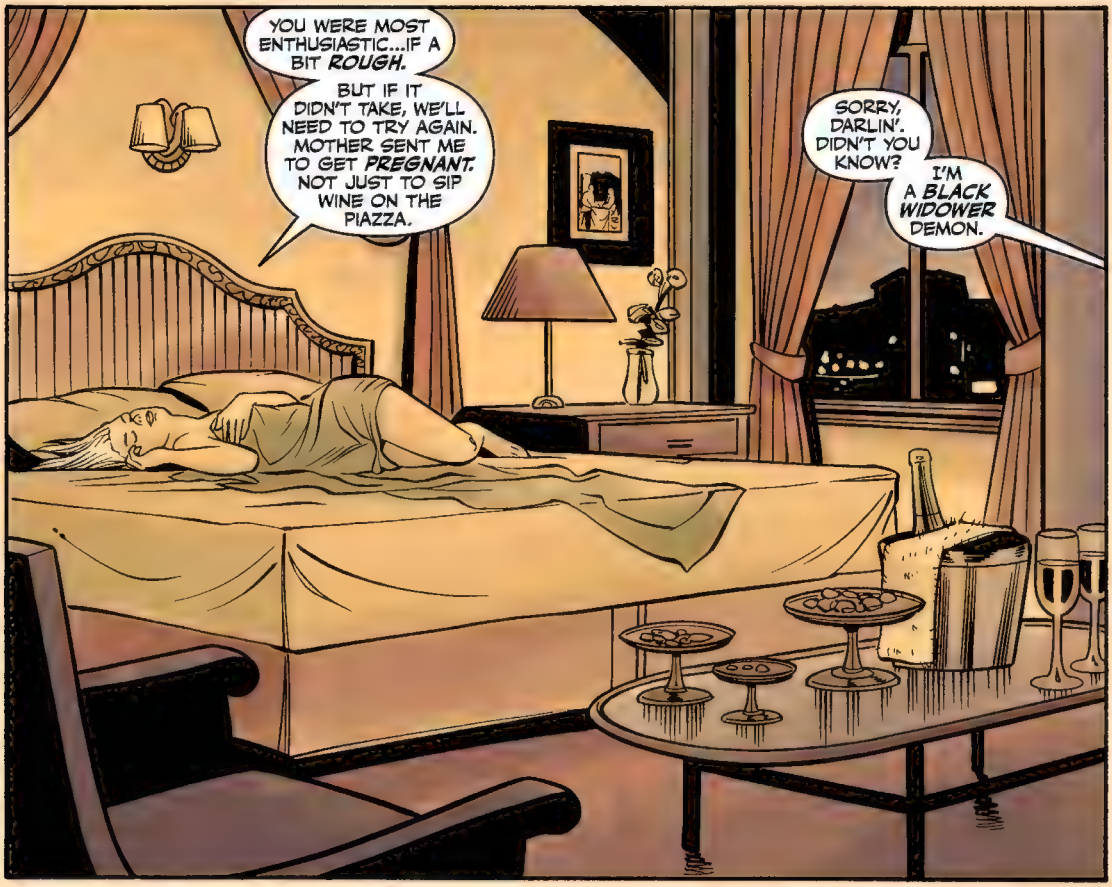
I'VE BEEN HERE A WHILE AND I'VE SEEN A LOT OF POTENTIAL SCAVENGERS COME AND GO.
THIS WORLD WILL NEVER SEE ANOTHER DROP OF NEW MAGIC, AND PEOPLE WILL BE FIGHTING FOR EVERY LEFTOVER CRUMB.
THE SHARDS COULD BE ANYWHERE.
AS IT HAPPENS, I MIGHT JUST KNOW A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT--
BABLOOM
PLACE IS GRAND CENTRAL STATION.

WE DO APOLOGIZE FOR THE DRAMATIC ENTRANCE.
DO WE?
NO, NOT REALLY.
WELL... IF IT ISN'T FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC.

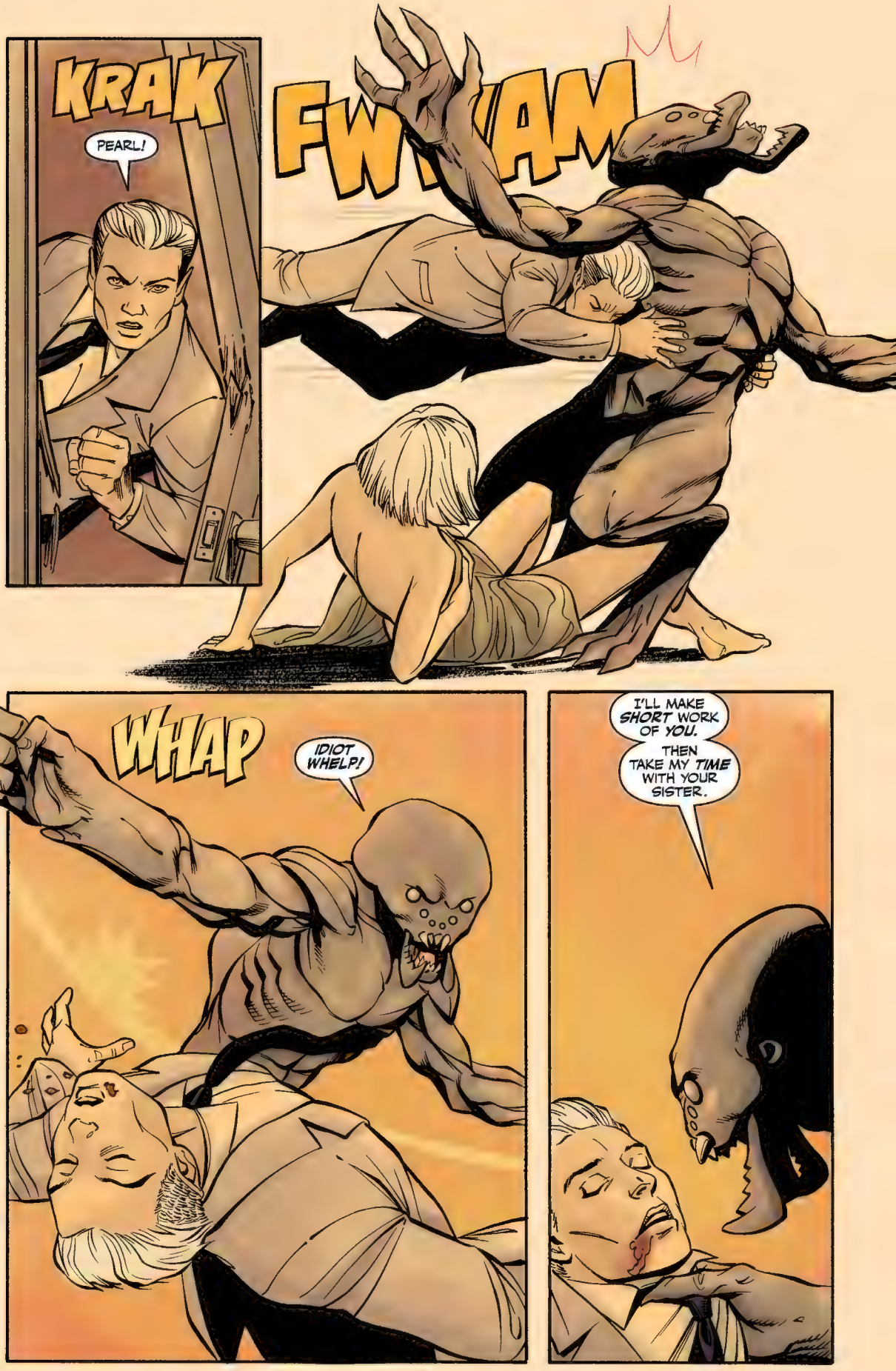


A DARK PLACE

PART 3 OF 5

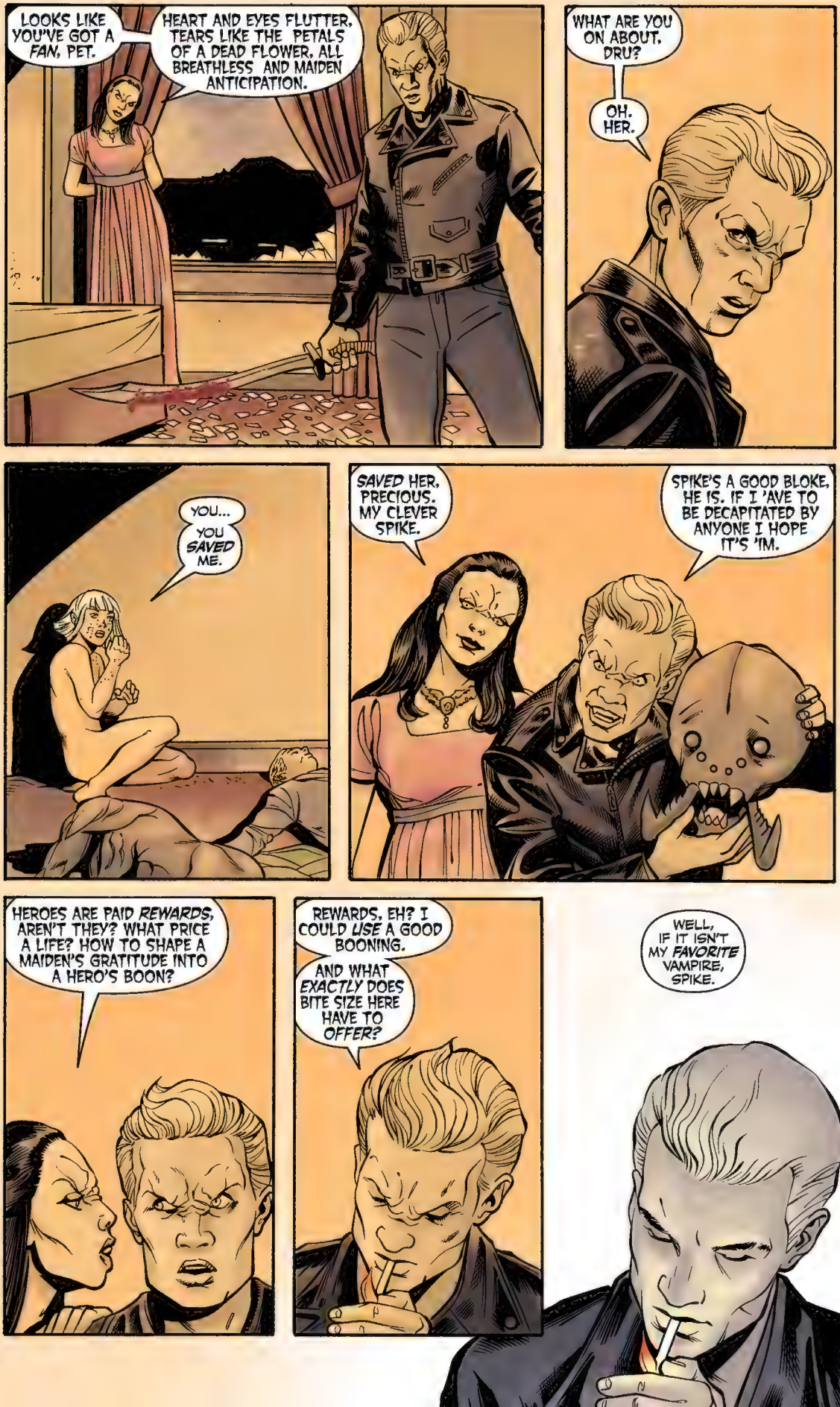


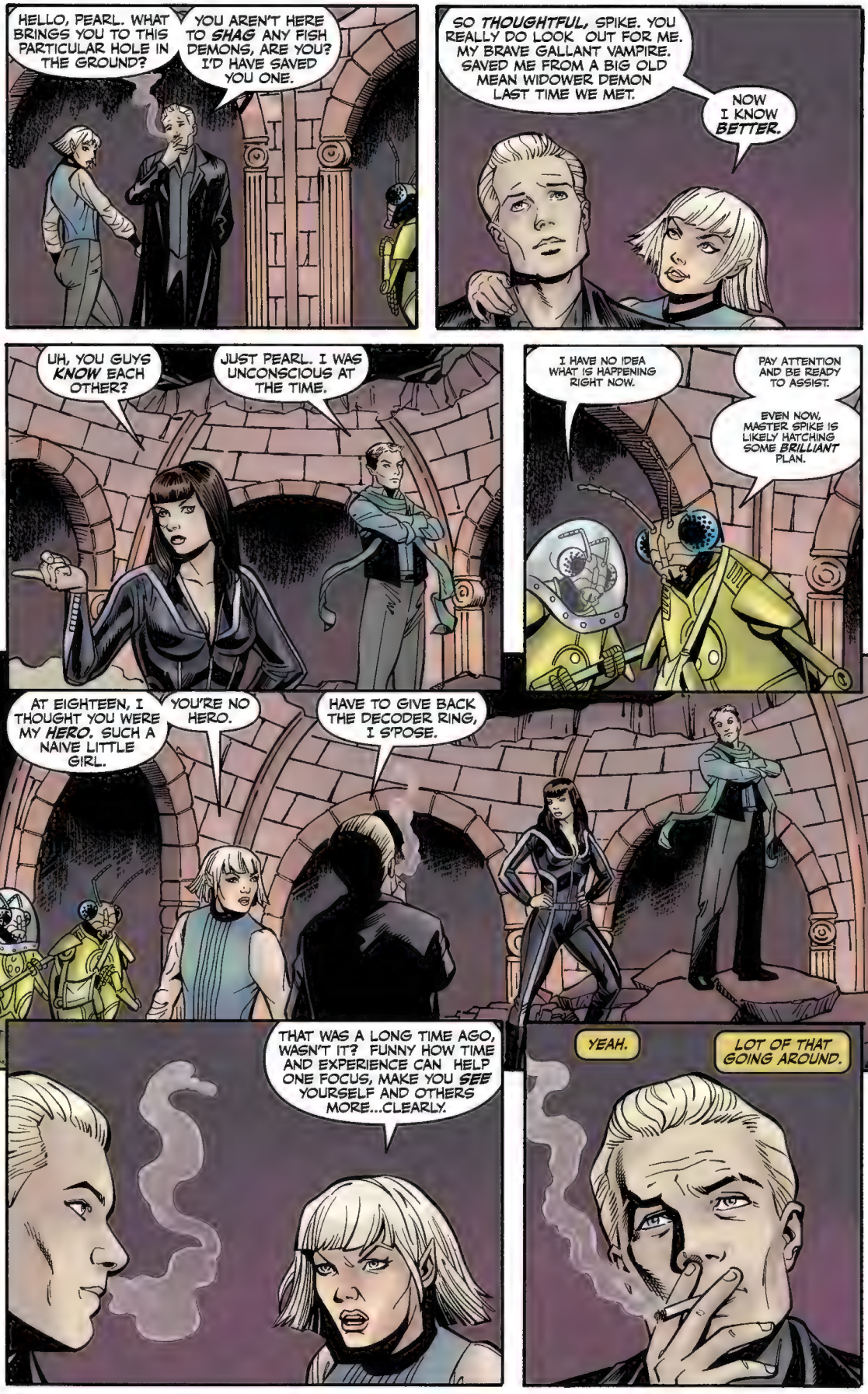
AND WE ALWAYS FEED AFTER WE MATE.
OH?
HRAWRR
NASH NASH NASH NASH!
NASH!

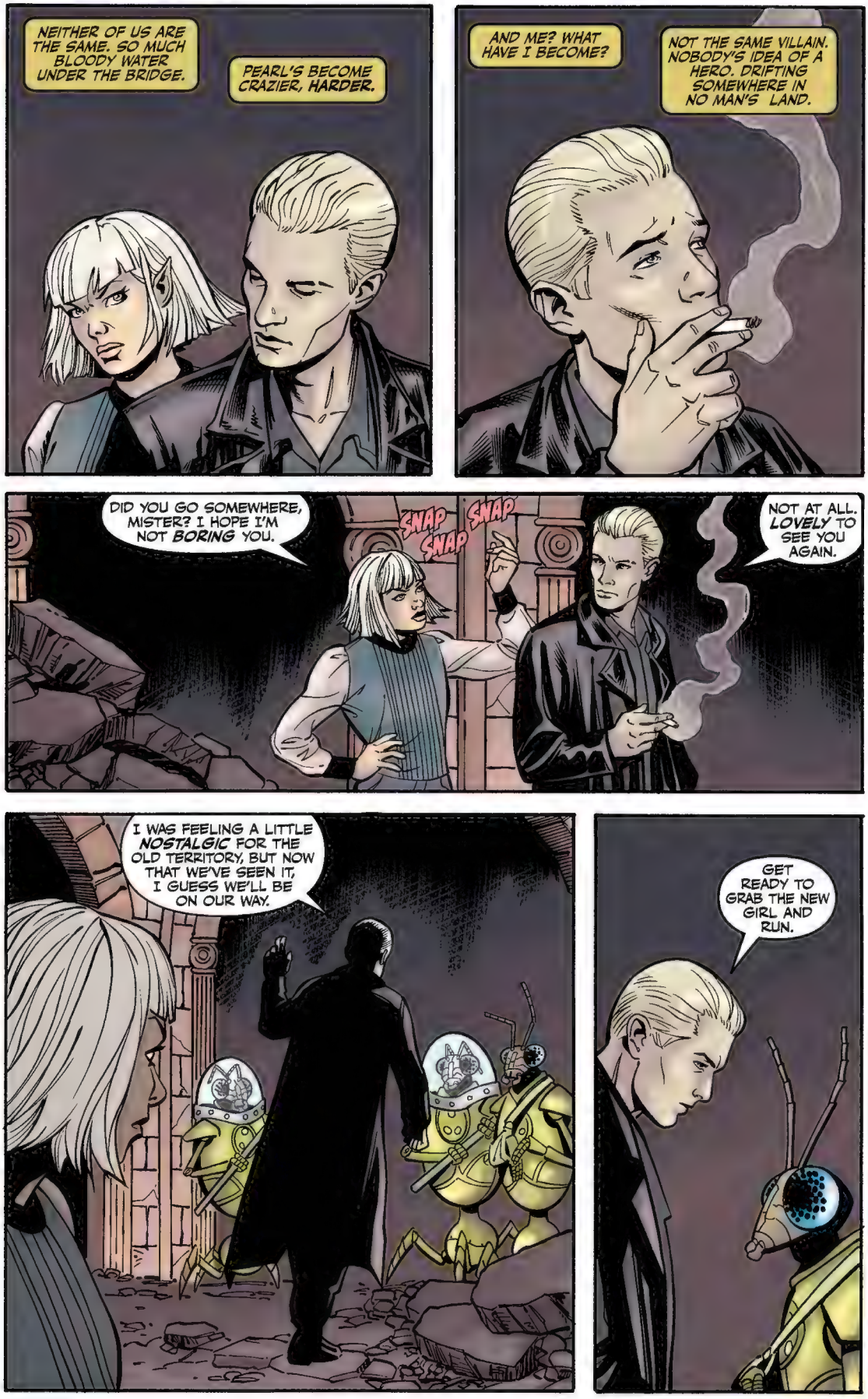

KRAK
PEARL!
FWAM
WHAP
IDIOT WHELP!
I'LL MAKE SHORT WORK OF YOU.
THEN TAKE MY TIME WITH YOUR SISTER.

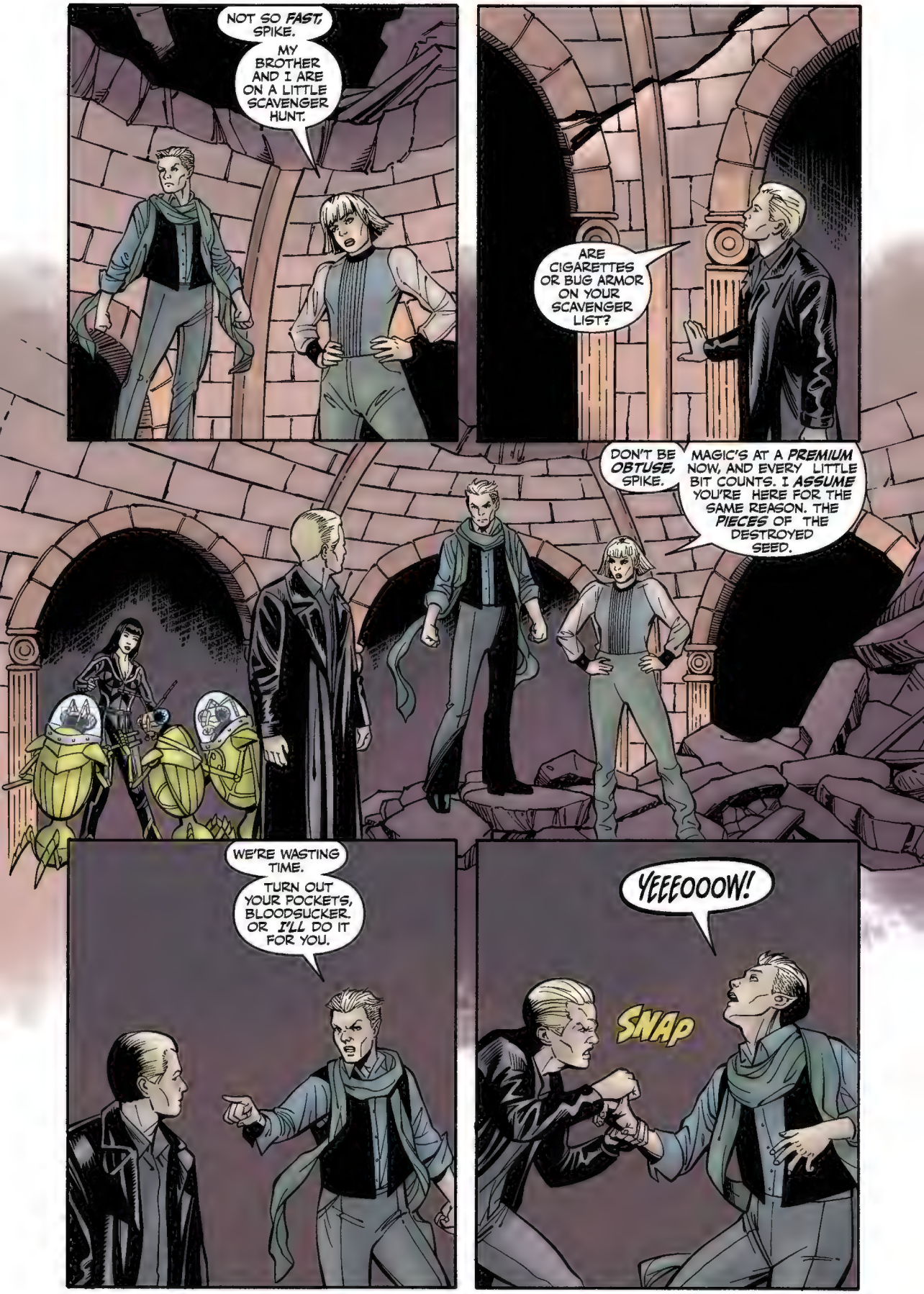
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
VZZZAP
IF YOU'RE IN SUCH A HURRY TO GET EATEN, I'LL OBLIGE YOU.
GO AHEAD AND SQUIRM. IT'S BETTER THAT WAY.
KRASH

SPIKE! HEY, MAN, I WAS JUST COMING TO SEE YOU AFTER I HAD A LIGHT SNACK.
I'LL GET YOU YOUR MONEY. I SWEAR!
THEY WARNED ME NOT TO PLAY CARDS WITH YOU, WIDOWER.
NOW IT COMES OUT OF YOUR HIDE, MATE.
I'LL PAY YOU DOUBLE, SPIKE. TRIPLE!
I'LL PAY YOU ANYTHING YOU--
SWAK


LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT A *FAN*, PET.
HEART AND EYES FLUTTER, TEARS LIKE THE PETALS OF A DEAD FLOWER, ALL BREATHLESS AND MAIDEN ANTICIPATION.
WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT, DRU?
OH. HER.
YOU...
YOU *SAVED* ME.
SAVED HER, PRECIOUS. MY CLEVER SPIKE.
SPIKE'S A GOOD BLOKE, HE IS. IF I 'AVE TO BE DECAPITATED BY ANYONE I HOPE IT'S 'IM.
HEROES ARE PAID *REWARDS*, AREN'T THEY? WHAT PRICE A LIFE? HOW TO SHAPE A MAIDEN'S GRATITUDE INTO A HERO'S BOON?
REWARDS, EH? I COULD *USE* A GOOD BOONING.
AND WHAT *EXACTLY* DOES BITE SIZE HERE HAVE TO *OFFER?*
WELL, IF IT ISN'T MY *FAVORITE* VAMPIRE, SPIKE.


HELLO, PEARL. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS PARTICULAR HOLE IN THE GROUND?
YOU AREN'T HERE TO SHAG ANY FISH DEMONS, ARE YOU? I'D HAVE SAVED YOU ONE.
SO THOUGHTFUL, SPIKE. YOU REALLY DO LOOK OUT FOR ME. MY BRAVE GALLANT VAMPIRE. SAVED ME FROM A BIG OLD MEAN WIDOWER DEMON LAST TIME WE MET.
NOW I KNOW BETTER.
UH, YOU GUYS KNOW EACH OTHER?
JUST PEARL. I WAS UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.
PAY ATTENTION AND BE READY TO ASSIST.
EVEN NOW, MASTER SPIKE IS LIKELY HATCHING SOME BRILLIANT PLAN.
AT EIGHTEEN, I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY HERO. SUCH A NAIVE LITTLE GIRL.
YOU'RE NO HERO.
HAVE TO GIVE BACK THE DECODER RING, I S'POSE.
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, WASN'T IT? FUNNY HOW TIME AND EXPERIENCE CAN HELP ONE FOCUS, MAKE YOU SEE YOURSELF AND OTHERS MORE...CLEARLY.
YEAH.
LOT OF THAT GOING AROUND.

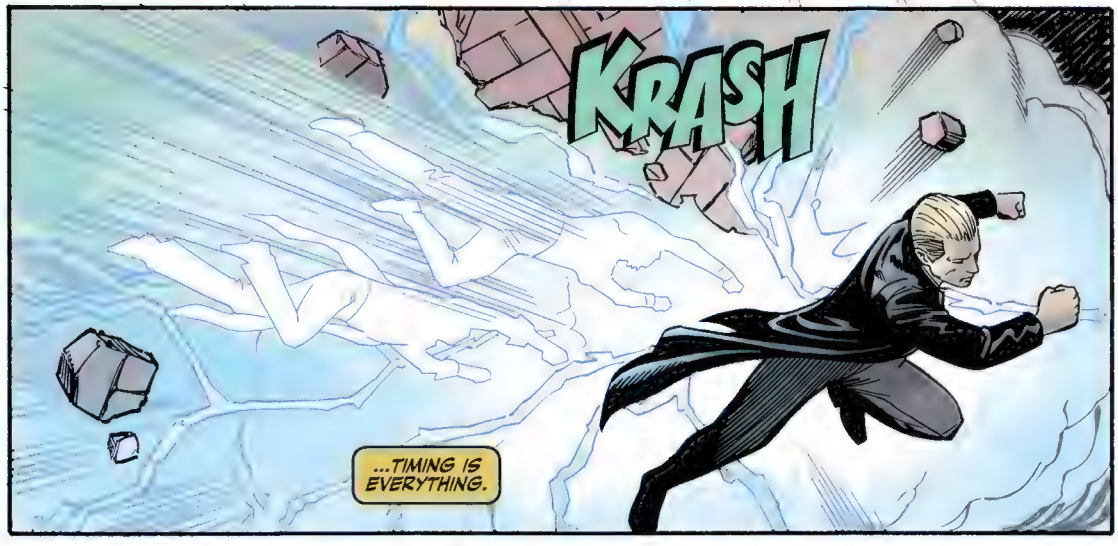

NEITHER OF US ARE THE SAME. SO MUCH BLOODY WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE.
PEARL'S BECOME CRAZIER, HARDER.
AND ME? WHAT HAVE I BECOME?
NOT THE SAME VILLAIN. NOBODY'S IDEA OF A HERO. DRIFTING SOMEWHERE IN NO MAN'S LAND.
DID YOU GO SOMEWHERE, MISTER? I HOPE I'M NOT BORING YOU.
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
NOT AT ALL. LOVELY TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
I WAS FEELING A LITTLE NOSTALGIC FOR THE OLD TERRITORY, BUT NOW THAT WE'VE SEEN IT, I GUESS WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY.
GET READY TO GRAB THE NEW GIRL AND RUN.

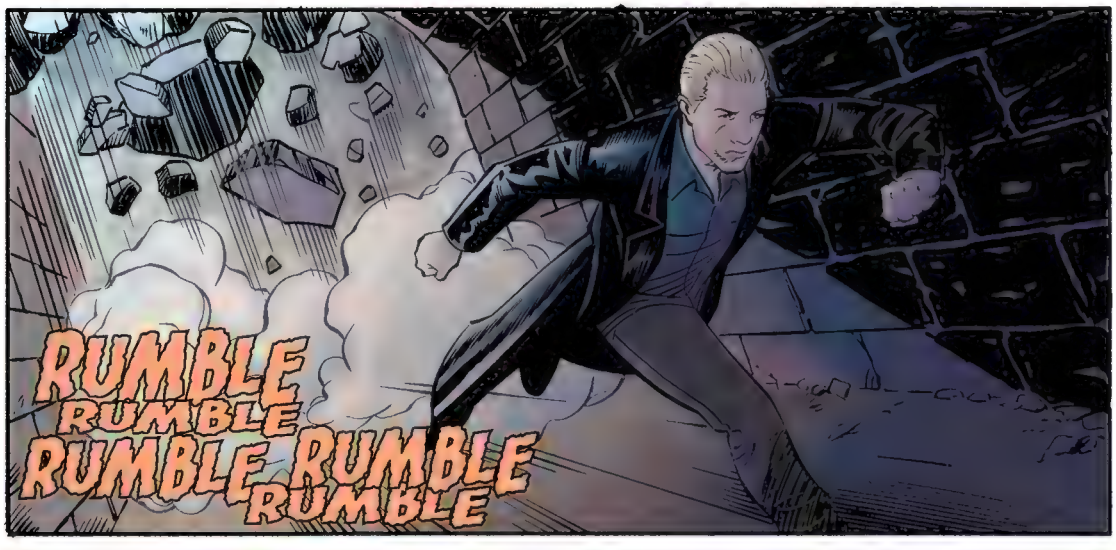

NOT SO FAST, SPIKE.
MY BROTHER AND I ARE ON A LITTLE SCAVENGER HUNT.
ARE CIGARETTES OR BUG ARMOR ON YOUR SCAVENGER LIST?
DON'T BE OBTUSE, SPIKE.
MAGIC'S AT A PREMIUM NOW, AND EVERY LITTLE BIT COUNTS. I ASSUME YOU'RE HERE FOR THE SAME REASON. THE PIECES OF THE DESTROYED SEED.
WE'RE WASTING TIME.
TURN OUT YOUR POCKETS, BLOODSUCKER. OR I'LL DO IT FOR YOU.
YEEEOOOW!
SNAP

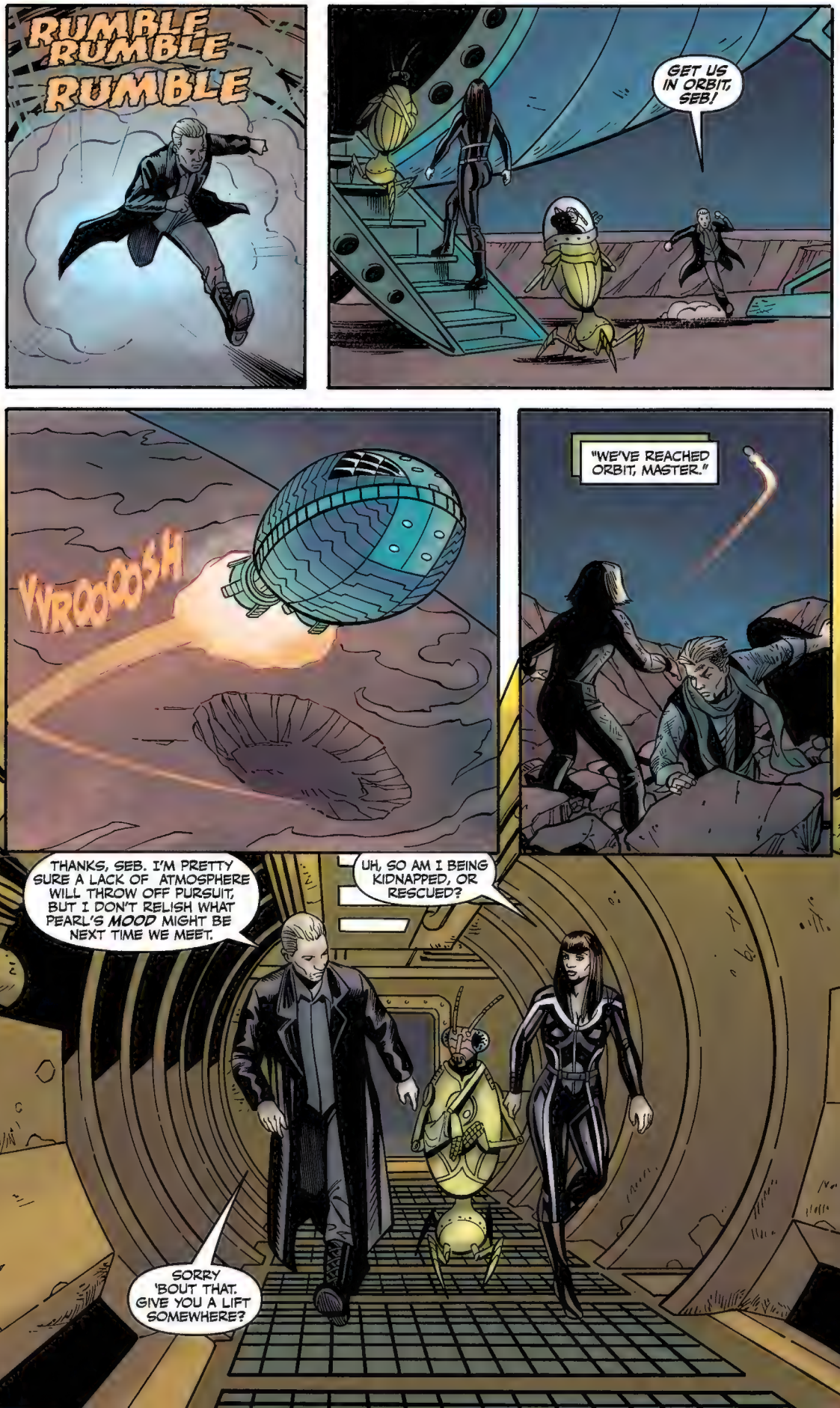
SMAK
BASTARD!
TIME TO GO, MISS.
WHAT THE--?!
TEEING HIM UP FOR YOU, BROTHER!
WHAPP
I JUST NEVER GET TIRED OF PUNCHING THIS GUY.
WHAPP
ENOUGH. END HIM.
MY PLEASURE.

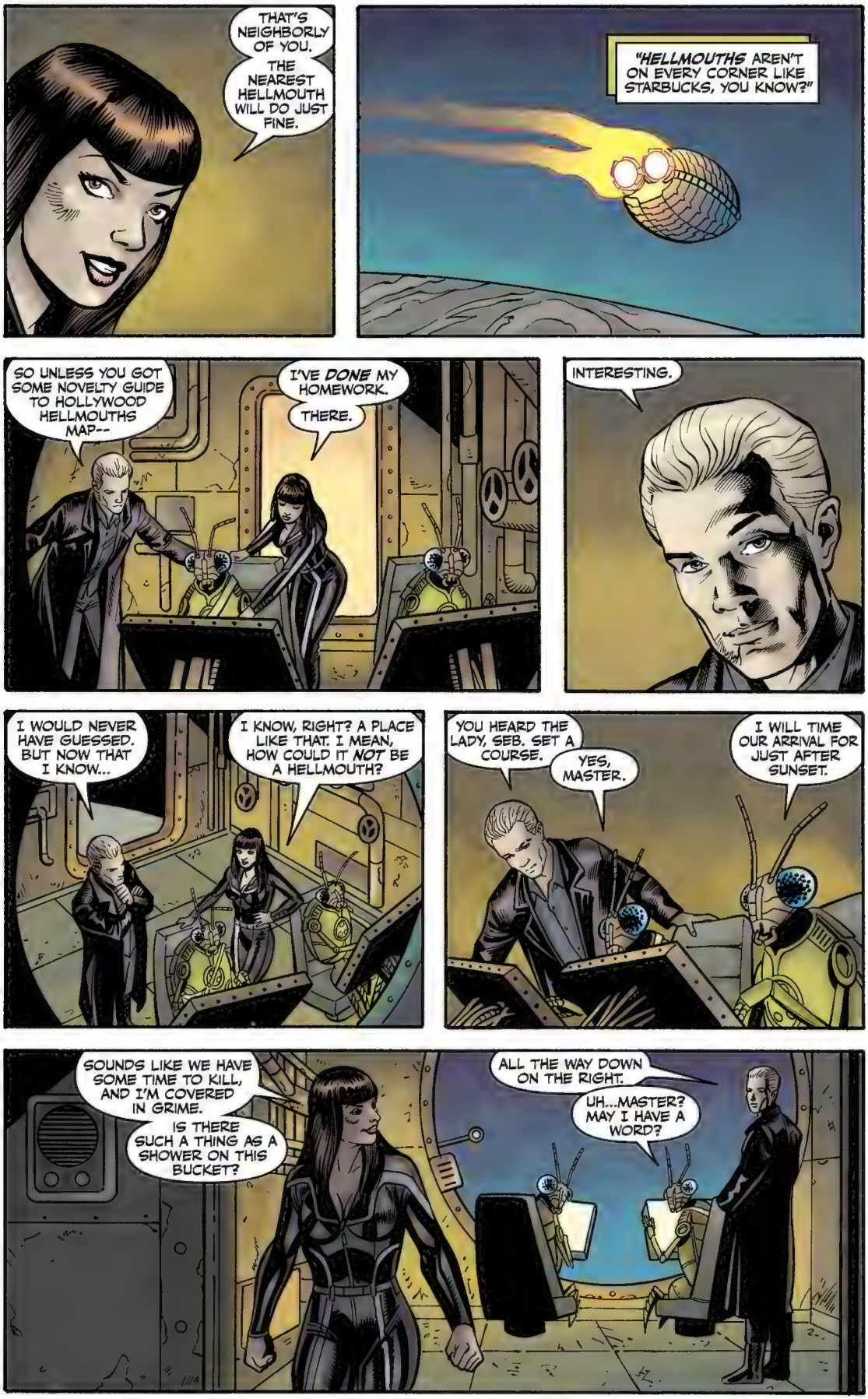
IF I DO THIS RIGHT, I SHOULD MUDDLE THEM UP ENOUGH TO GET AWAY.

AND JUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN LIFE...


KRASH
...TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

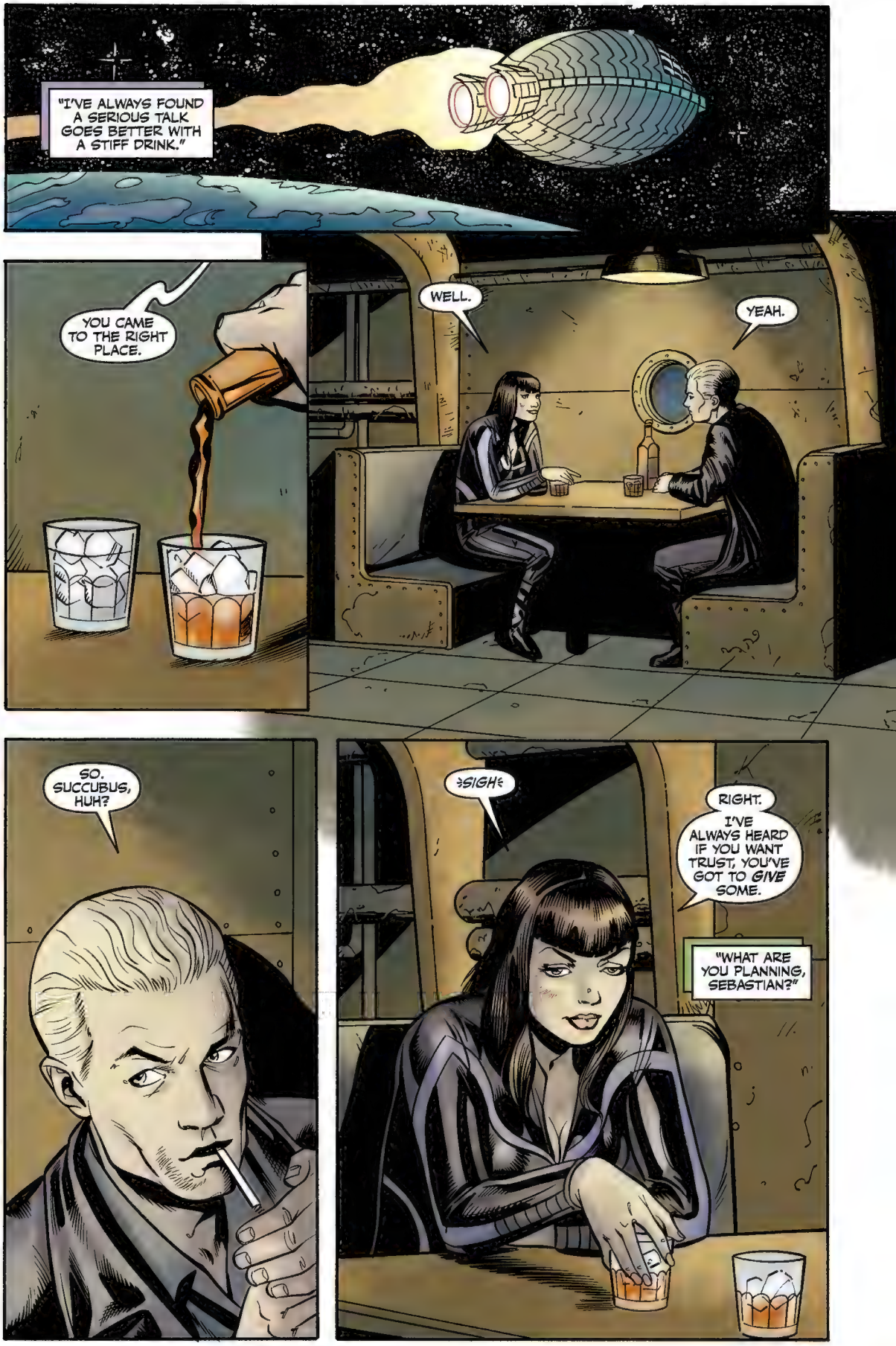

RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

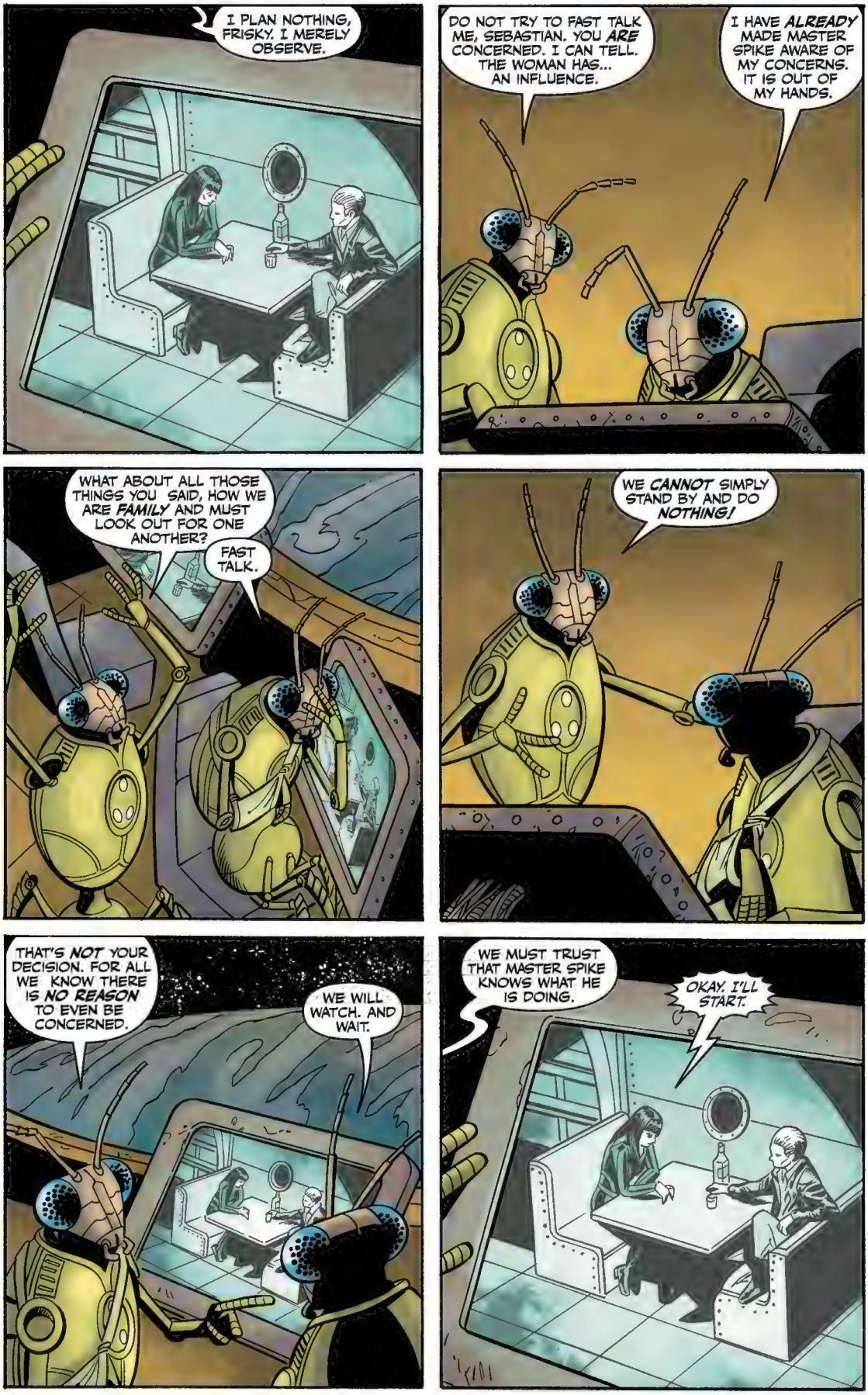

RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
GET US IN ORBIT, SEB!
VVROOOOSH
"WE'VE REACHED ORBIT, MASTER."
THANKS, SEB. I'M PRETTY SURE A LACK OF ATMOSPHERE WILL THROW OFF PURSUIT, BUT I DON'T RELISH WHAT PEARL'S MOOD MIGHT BE NEXT TIME WE MEET.
UH, SO AM I BEING KIDNAPPED, OR RESCUED?
SORRY 'BOUT THAT. GIVE YOU A LIFT SOMEWHERE?


THAT'S NEIGHBORLY OF YOU.
THE NEAREST HELLMOUTH WILL DO JUST FINE.
"HELLMOUTHS AREN'T ON EVERY CORNER LIKE STARBUCKS, YOU KNOW?"
SO UNLESS YOU GOT SOME NOVELTY GUIDE TO HOLLYWOOD HELLMOUTHS MAP--
I'VE DONE MY HOMEWORK.
THERE.
INTERESTING.
I WOULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED. BUT NOW THAT I KNOW...
I KNOW, RIGHT? A PLACE LIKE THAT. I MEAN, HOW COULD IT NOT BE A HELLMOUTH?
YOU HEARD THE LADY, SEB. SET A COURSE.
YES, MASTER.
I WILL TIME OUR ARRIVAL FOR JUST AFTER SUNSET.
SOUNDS LIKE WE HAVE SOME TIME TO KILL, AND I'M COVERED IN GRIME.
IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A SHOWER ON THIS BUCKET?
ALL THE WAY DOWN ON THE RIGHT.
UH...MASTER? MAY I HAVE A WORD?

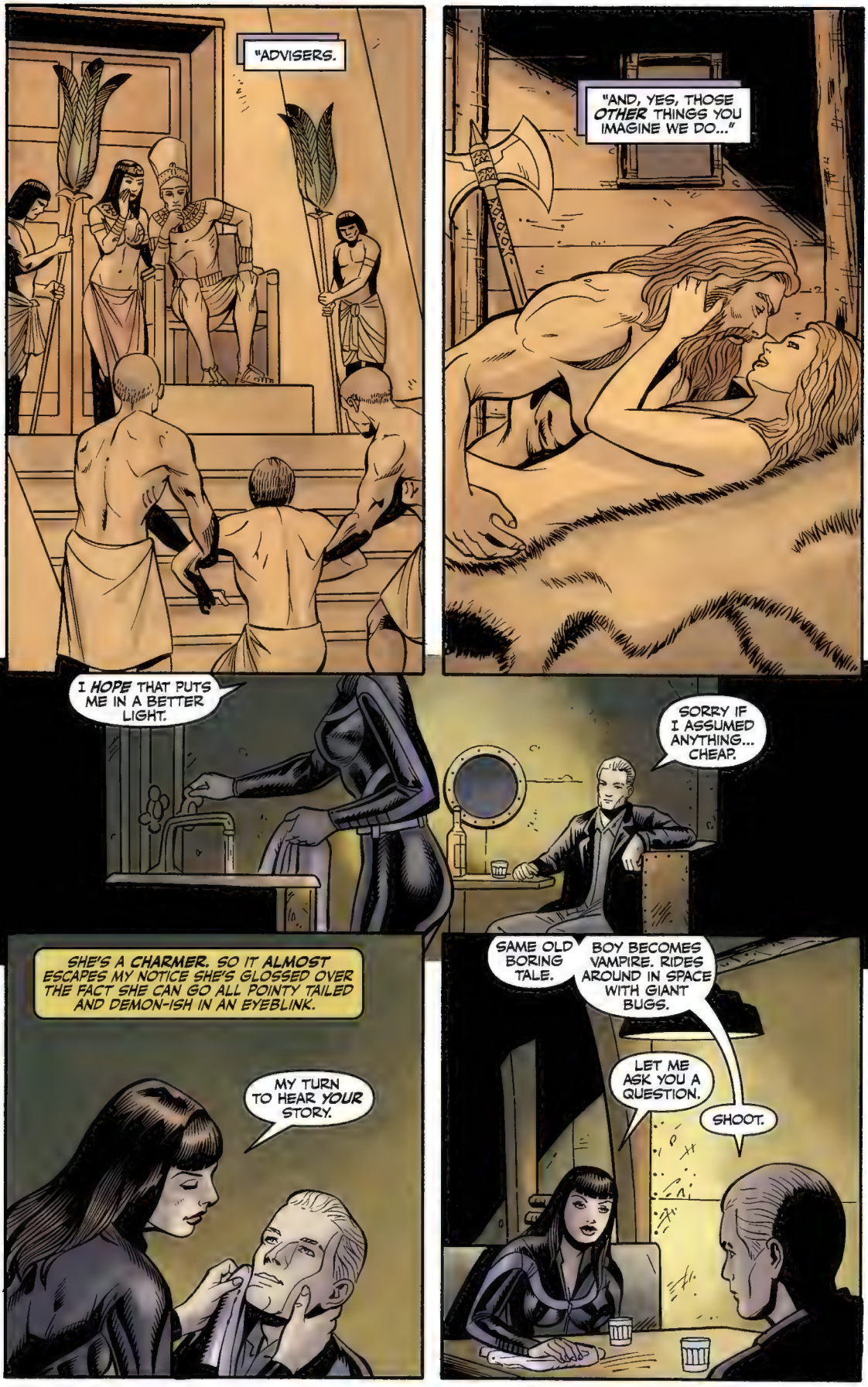
MASTER, WE HAVE ONLY JUST MET THIS WOMAN. IS IT WISE TO ALLOW HER TO DICTATE THE COURSE OF THE SHIP AND--
SEB, REFRESHER COURSE. I AM THE HIGH AND MIGHTY POO-BAH. *YOU* ARE THE SCURRYING YES MAN...YES BUG, ACTUALLY.
WITH RESPECT, MASTER, CONSIDER THAT THE STURGEON DEMON CALLED HER A *SUCCUBUS*.
DO NOT SUCCUBI HAVE SPECIAL POWERS TO--
GIVE ME A *LITTLE* CREDIT, WON'T YOU, SEB?
IT'S NOT MY FIRST RODEO, OKAY? I'M NOT ABOUT TO FALL PREY TO ANY DEMONIC MANIPULATION.
THEN WHY, MASTER, ARE WE SO AGREEABLE TO TAKE MISS MORGAN TO A HELLMOUTH WHEN WE KNOW IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO OPEN IT WITHOUT MAGIC?
IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A SHARD OF THE SEED REMAINED, MASTER?
A SHARD THAT WOULD ALLOW HER TO OPEN THE HELLMOUTH?
HAVE YOU NOT CONSIDERED THIS?
RIGHT. GOOD TALK, SEB.
EXCUSE ME WHILE I LOOK INTO SOMETHING.

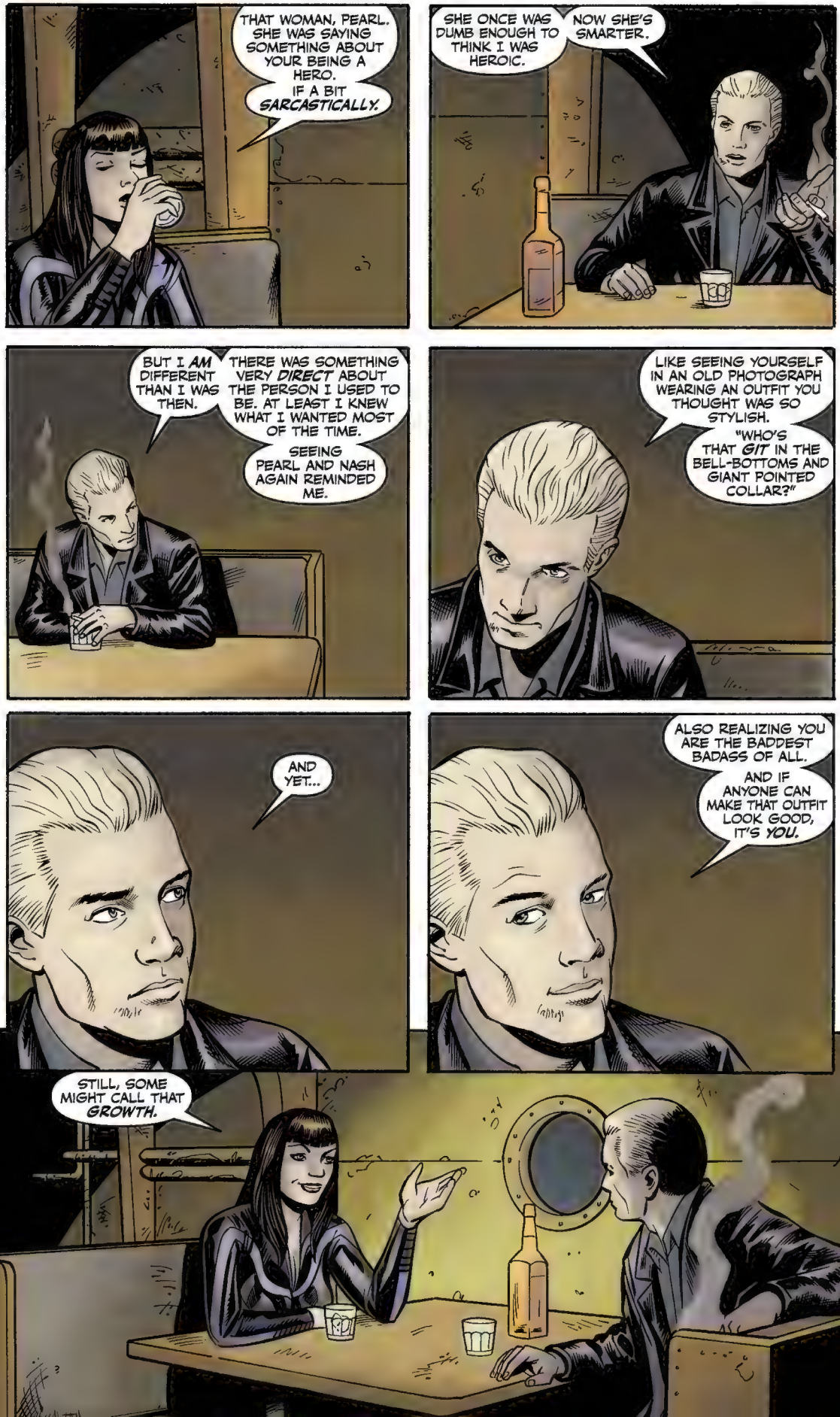
FSHHHHHHH
FSHHHH
FSH
HHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
FSHHHHHH
GO AHEAD AND LOOK.
THROUGH MY CLOTHES, I MEAN. IT'S OKAY.
NOW HAND ME THAT TOWEL.
AND LET'S TALK.

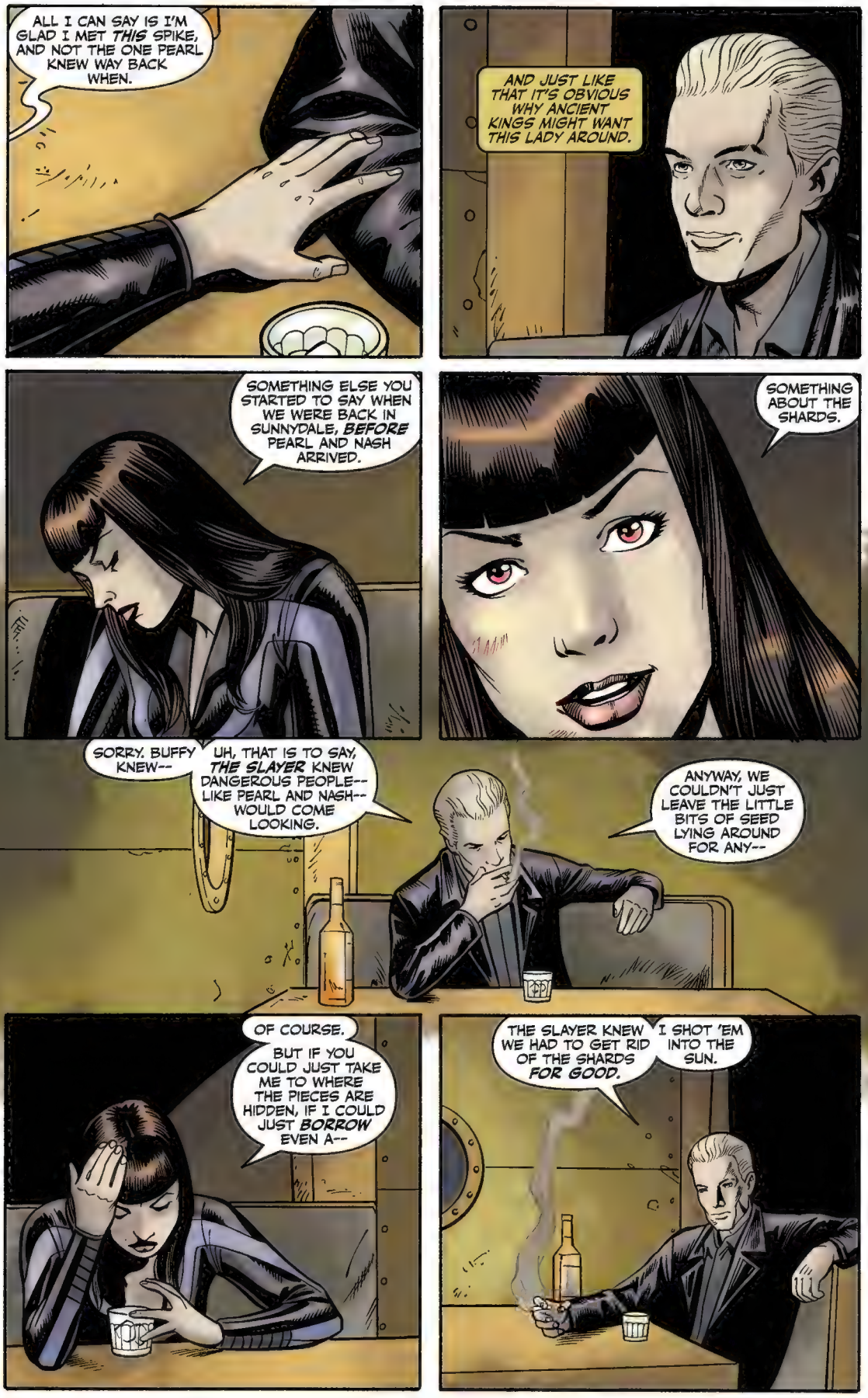

"I'VE ALWAYS FOUND A SERIOUS TALK GOES BETTER WITH A STIFF DRINK."
YOU CAME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.
WELL.
YEAH.
SO. SUCCUBUS, HUH?
SIGH
RIGHT. I'VE ALWAYS HEARD IF YOU WANT TRUST, YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE SOME.
"WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING, SEBASTIAN?"

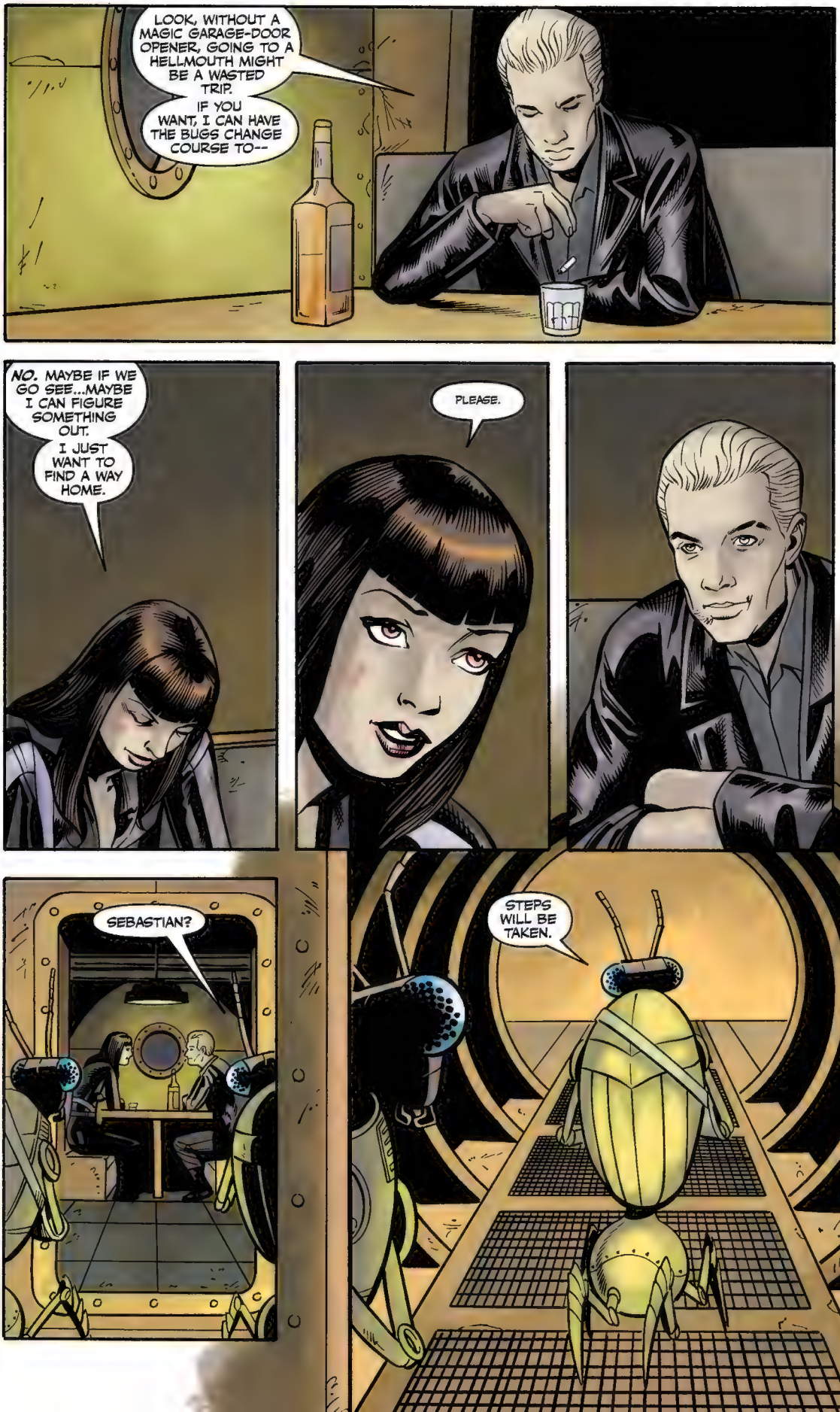

I PLAN NOTHING, FRISKY. I MERELY OBSERVE.
DO NOT TRY TO FAST TALK ME, SEBASTIAN. YOU *ARE* CONCERNED. I CAN TELL. THE WOMAN HAS... AN INFLUENCE.
I HAVE *ALREADY* MADE MASTER SPIKE AWARE OF MY CONCERNS. IT IS OUT OF MY HANDS.
WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE THINGS YOU SAID, HOW WE ARE *FAMILY* AND MUST LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER?
FAST TALK.
WE *CANNOT* SIMPLY STAND BY AND DO *NOTHING!*
THAT'S *NOT* YOUR DECISION. FOR ALL WE KNOW THERE IS *NO REASON* TO EVEN BE CONCERNED.
WE WILL WATCH. AND WAIT.
WE MUST TRUST THAT MASTER SPIKE KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING.
OKAY. I'LL START.

I KNOW THE STURGEON DEMON CALLED ME A SUCCUBUS, BUT REALLY THAT'S A CATCHALL TERM. I GUESS I FALL GENERALLY INTO THAT CATEGORY, BUT I'M MORE...HIGH END.
THERE'S A WORD FOR US IN THE ANCIENT TONGUE, BUT IT DOESN'T TRANSLATE WELL. MOST REFER TO US AS COURTESAN DEMONS.
COURTESAN. ISN'T THAT JUST A FANCY WAY OF SAYING...?
WELL, YOU TELL ME.
MY SORT OF DEMON WAS OFTEN SUMMONED AND BOUND TO ANCIENT RULERS.
GREAT MEN OFTEN FIND IT SO DIFFICULT TO TRUST WOMEN.
WE WERE USEFUL. VALUED.
"WE WERE COMFORTERS.
"FRIENDS.


"ADVISERS.
"AND, YES, THOSE OTHER THINGS YOU IMAGINE WE DO..."
I HOPE THAT PUTS ME IN A BETTER LIGHT.
SORRY IF I ASSUMED ANYTHING... CHEAP.
SHE'S A CHARMER. SO IT ALMOST ESCAPES MY NOTICE SHE'S GLOSSED OVER THE FACT SHE CAN GO ALL POINTY TAILED AND DEMON-ISH IN AN EYEBLINK.
MY TURN TO HEAR YOUR STORY.
SAME OLD BORING TALE.
BOY BECOMES VAMPIRE. RIDES AROUND IN SPACE WITH GIANT BUGS.
LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION.
SHOOT.

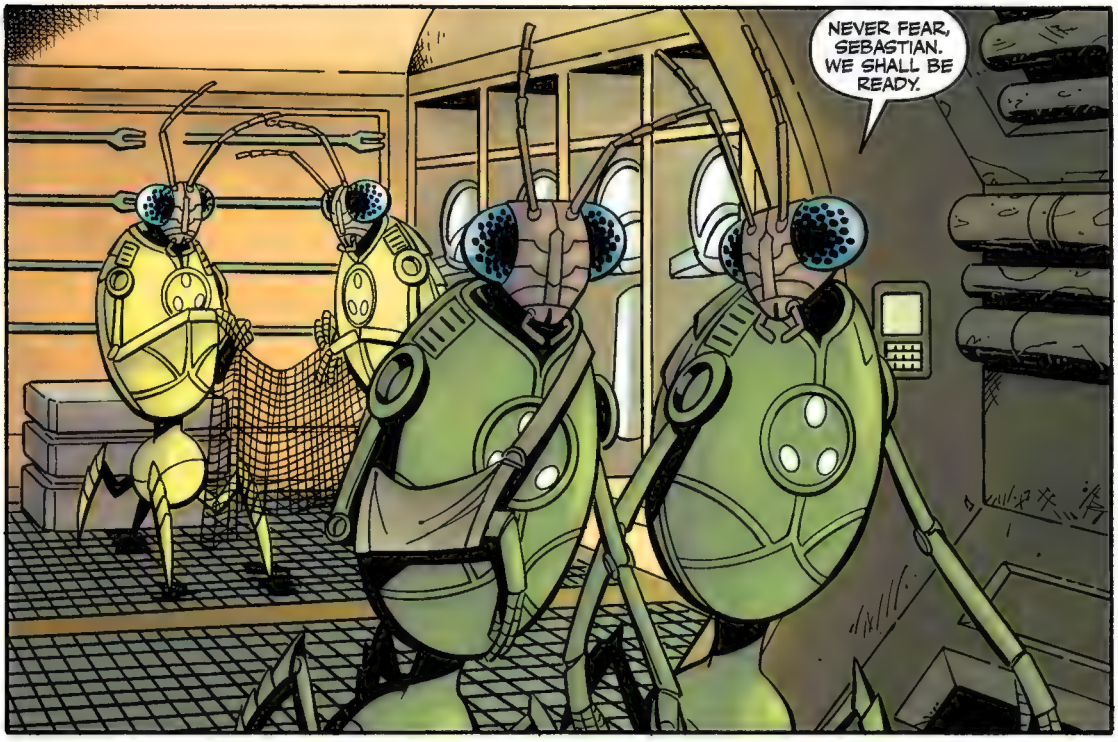

THAT WOMAN, PEARL. SHE WAS SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BEING A HERO.
IF A BIT SARCASTICALLY.
SHE ONCE WAS DUMB ENOUGH TO THINK I WAS HEROIC.
NOW SHE'S SMARTER.
BUT I AM DIFFERENT THAN I WAS THEN.
THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY DIRECT ABOUT THE PERSON I USED TO BE. AT LEAST I KNEW WHAT I WANTED MOST OF THE TIME.
SEEING PEARL AND NASH AGAIN REMINDED ME.
LIKE SEEING YOURSELF IN AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH WEARING AN OUTFIT YOU THOUGHT WAS SO STYLISH.
"WHO'S THAT GIT IN THE BELL-BOTTOMS AND GIANT POINTED COLLAR?"
AND YET...
ALSO REALIZING YOU ARE THE BADDEST BADASS OF ALL.
AND IF ANYONE CAN MAKE THAT OUTFIT LOOK GOOD, IT'S YOU.
STILL, SOME MIGHT CALL THAT GROWTH.

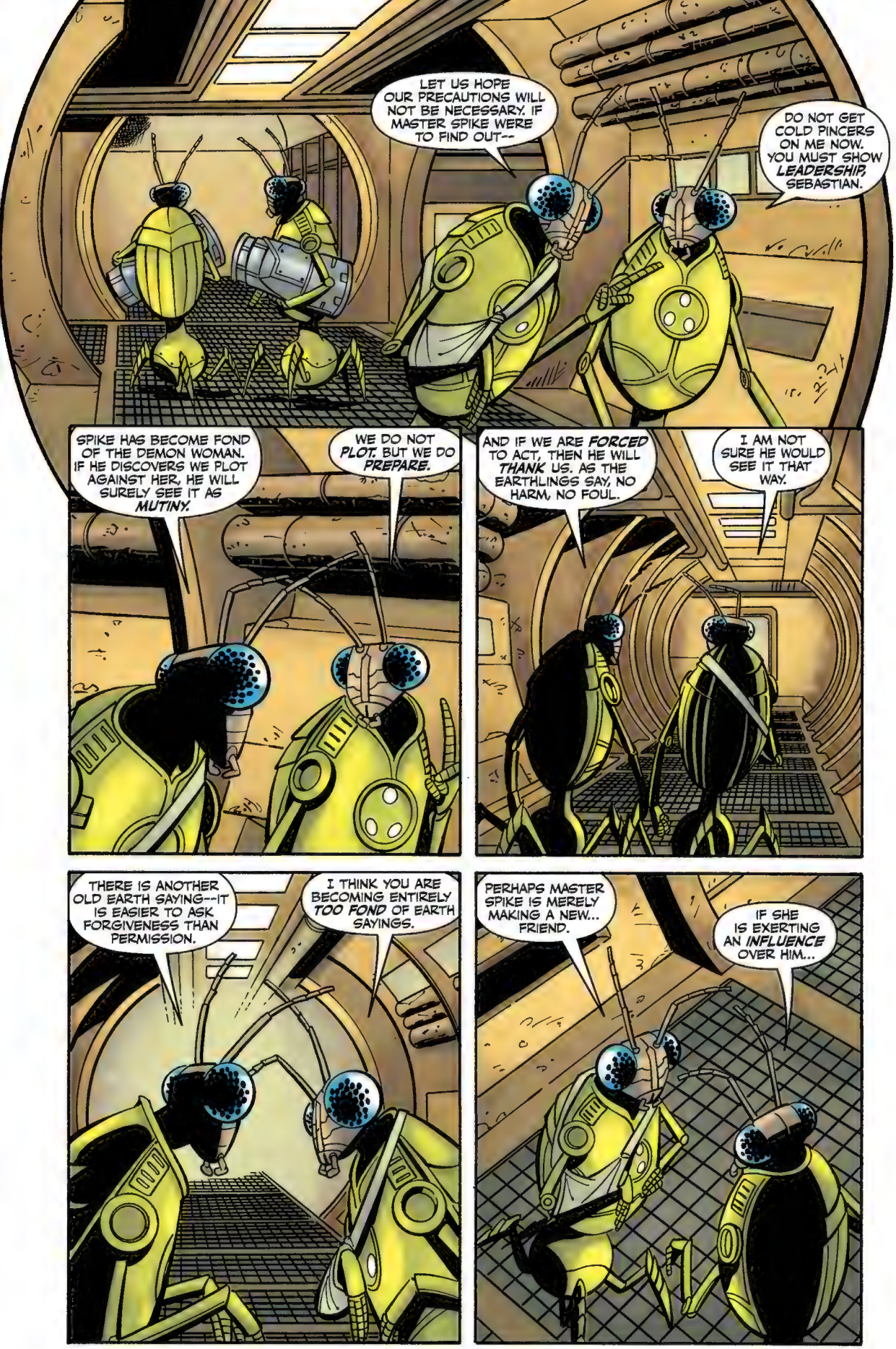

ALL I CAN SAY IS I'M GLAD I MET THIS SPIKE, AND NOT THE ONE PEARL KNEW WAY BACK WHEN.
AND JUST LIKE THAT IT'S OBVIOUS WHY ANCIENT KINGS MIGHT WANT THIS LADY AROUND.
SOMETHING ELSE YOU STARTED TO SAY WHEN WE WERE BACK IN SUNNYDALE, BEFORE PEARL AND NASH ARRIVED.
SOMETHING ABOUT THE SHARDS.
SORRY. BUFFY KNEW--
UH, THAT IS TO SAY, THE SLAYER KNEW DANGEROUS PEOPLE-- LIKE PEARL AND NASH-- WOULD COME LOOKING.
ANYWAY, WE COULDN'T JUST LEAVE THE LITTLE BITS OF SEED LYING AROUND FOR ANY--
OF COURSE.
BUT IF YOU COULD JUST TAKE ME TO WHERE THE PIECES ARE HIDDEN, IF I COULD JUST BORROW EVEN A--
THE SLAYER KNEW WE HAD TO GET RID OF THE SHARDS FOR GOOD.
I SHOT 'EM INTO THE SUN.

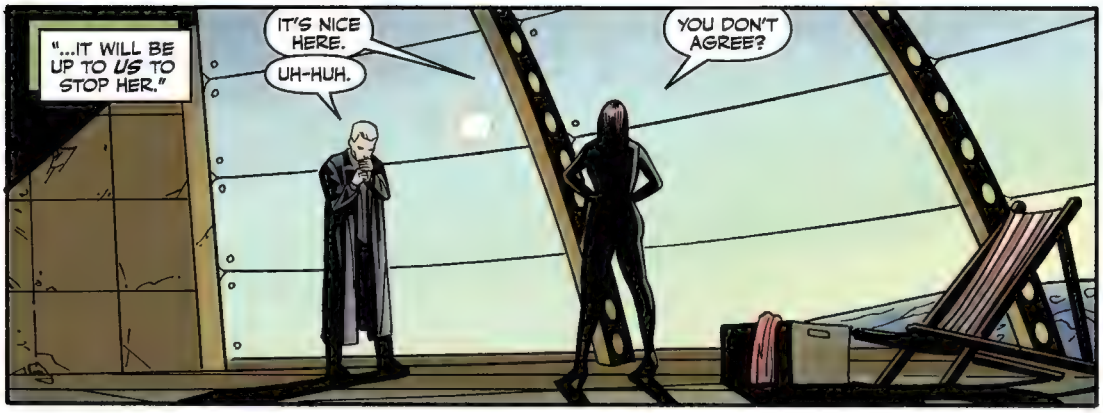

LOOK, WITHOUT A MAGIC GARAGE-DOOR OPENER, GOING TO A HELLMOUTH MIGHT BE A WASTED TRIP.
IF YOU WANT, I CAN HAVE THE BUGS CHANGE COURSE TO--
NO. MAYBE IF WE GO SEE...MAYBE I CAN FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
I JUST WANT TO FIND A WAY HOME.
PLEASE.
SEBASTIAN?
STEPS WILL BE TAKEN.

A DARK PLACE

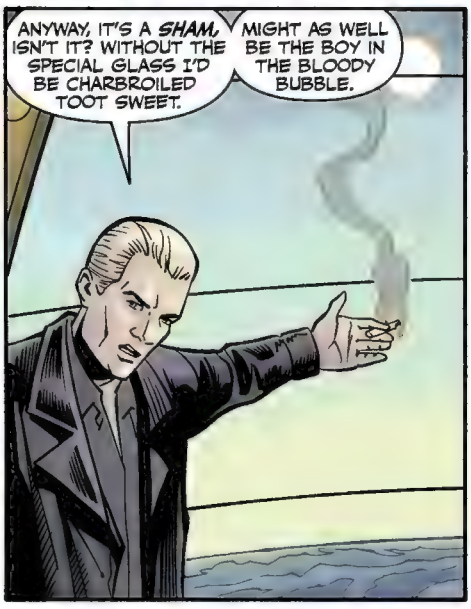
PART 4 OF 5




LET US HOPE OUR PRECAUTIONS WILL NOT BE NECESSARY. IF MASTER SPIKE WERE TO FIND OUT--
DO NOT GET COLD PINCERS ON ME NOW. YOU MUST SHOW *LEADERSHIP*, SEBASTIAN.
SPIKE HAS BECOME FOND OF THE DEMON WOMAN. IF HE DISCOVERS WE PLOT AGAINST HER, HE WILL SURELY SEE IT AS *MUTINY*.
WE DO NOT *PLOT*. BUT WE DO *PREPARE*.
AND IF WE ARE *FORCED* TO ACT, THEN HE WILL *THANK* US. AS THE EARTHLINGS SAY, NO HARM, NO FOUL.
I AM NOT SURE HE WOULD SEE IT THAT WAY.
THERE IS ANOTHER OLD EARTH SAYING--IT IS EASIER TO ASK FORGIVENESS THAN PERMISSION.
I THINK YOU ARE BECOMING ENTIRELY *TOO FOND* OF EARTH SAYINGS.
PERHAPS MASTER SPIKE IS MERELY MAKING A NEW... FRIEND.
IF SHE IS EXERTING AN *INFLUENCE* OVER HIM...

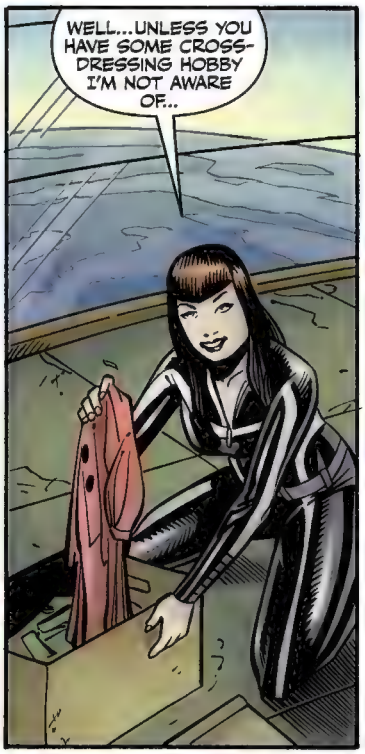

"...IT WILL BE UP TO *US* TO STOP HER."
IT'S NICE HERE.
UH-HUH.
YOU DON'T AGREE?

MY KIND ARE A BIT WARY OF THE BIG BRIGHT.
YOU DON'T MISS IT?
I'VE LEARNED NOT TO MISS WHAT I CAN'T HAVE ANYWAY. HELPS WITH THE SANITY.
AS IF *THAT'S* WORKING SO WELL.


ANYWAY, IT'S A *SHAM,* ISN'T IT? WITHOUT THE SPECIAL GLASS I'D BE CHARBROILED TOOT SWEET.
MIGHT AS WELL BE THE BOY IN THE BLOODY BUBBLE.

IF NOT TO BASK IN THE SUN'S GLORIOUS RAYS, THEN WHY ELSE DID YOU WANDER IN HERE?
IS IT BECAUSE THIS WAS *HER* ROOM?

HER WHO?


WELL...UNLESS YOU HAVE SOME CROSS-DRESSING HOBBY I'M NOT AWARE OF...

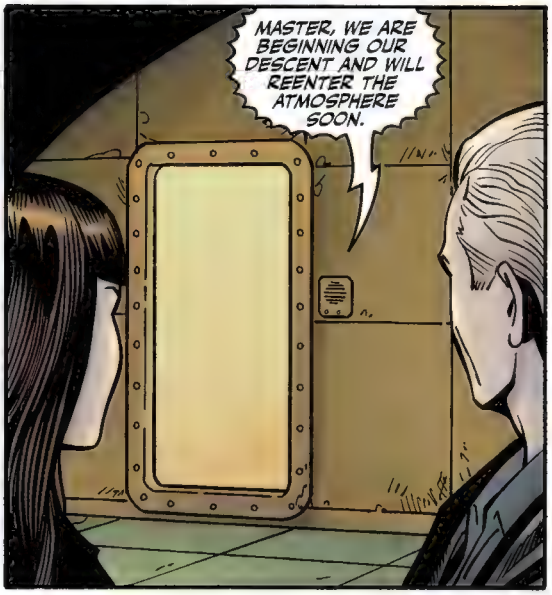
IT'S THE SLAYER'S, ISN'T IT?
IS THAT WOMAN'S INTUITION?

ASTUTE OBSERVATION. YOU COULD BARELY SAY HER NAME EARLIER WHEN WE WERE DISCUSSING THE SEED. BUFFY, IS IT?
YOU KNOW, KEEN INSIGHT IS NOT ALWAYS AN ATTRACTIVE QUALITY IN A WOMAN.

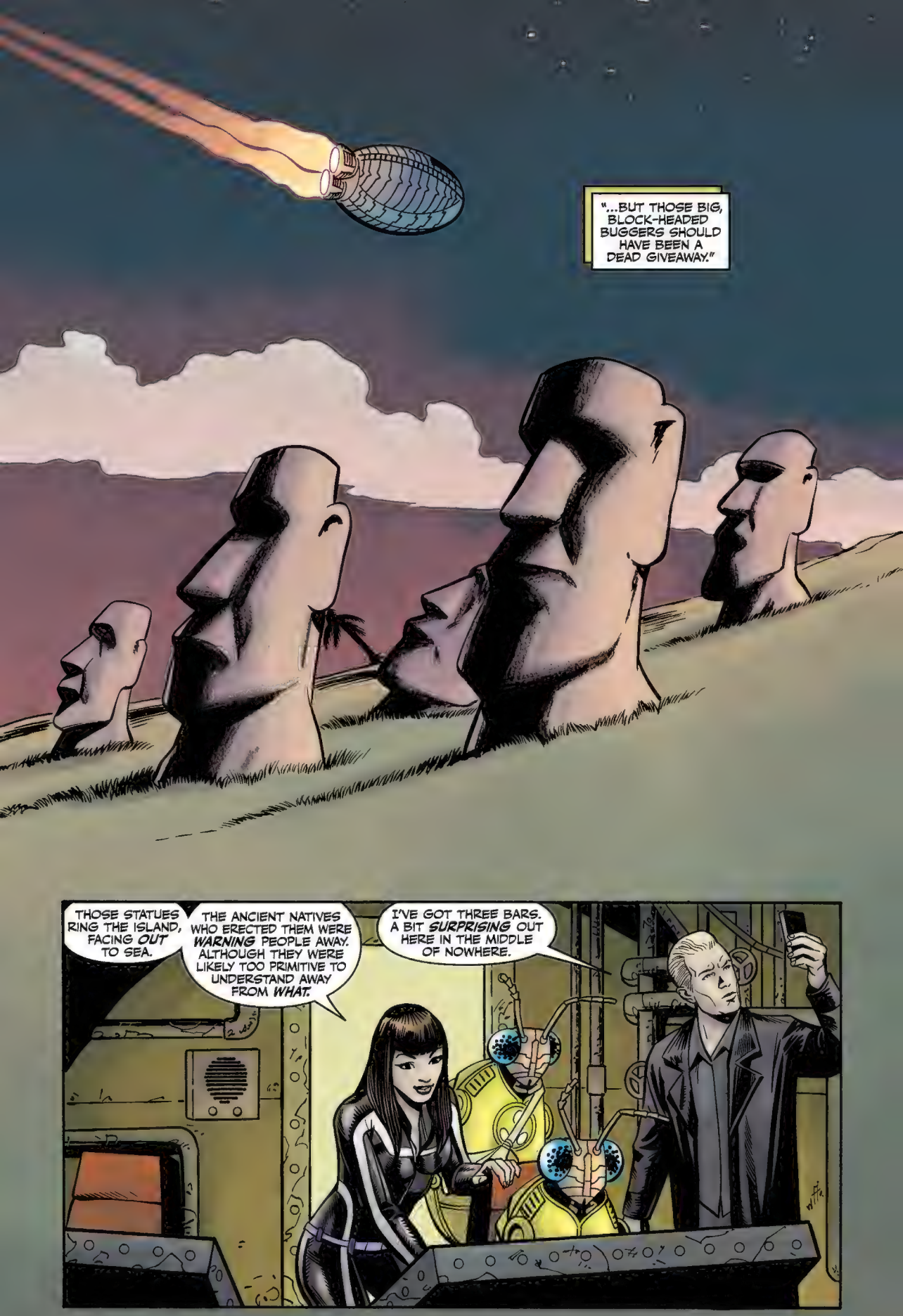
IT MIGHT HELP IF YOU HAD SOMEBODY TO TALK TO...SOMEBODY BESIDES A GIANT INSECT.
I CAN OFFER A SHOULDER TO CRY ON RIGHT HERE.

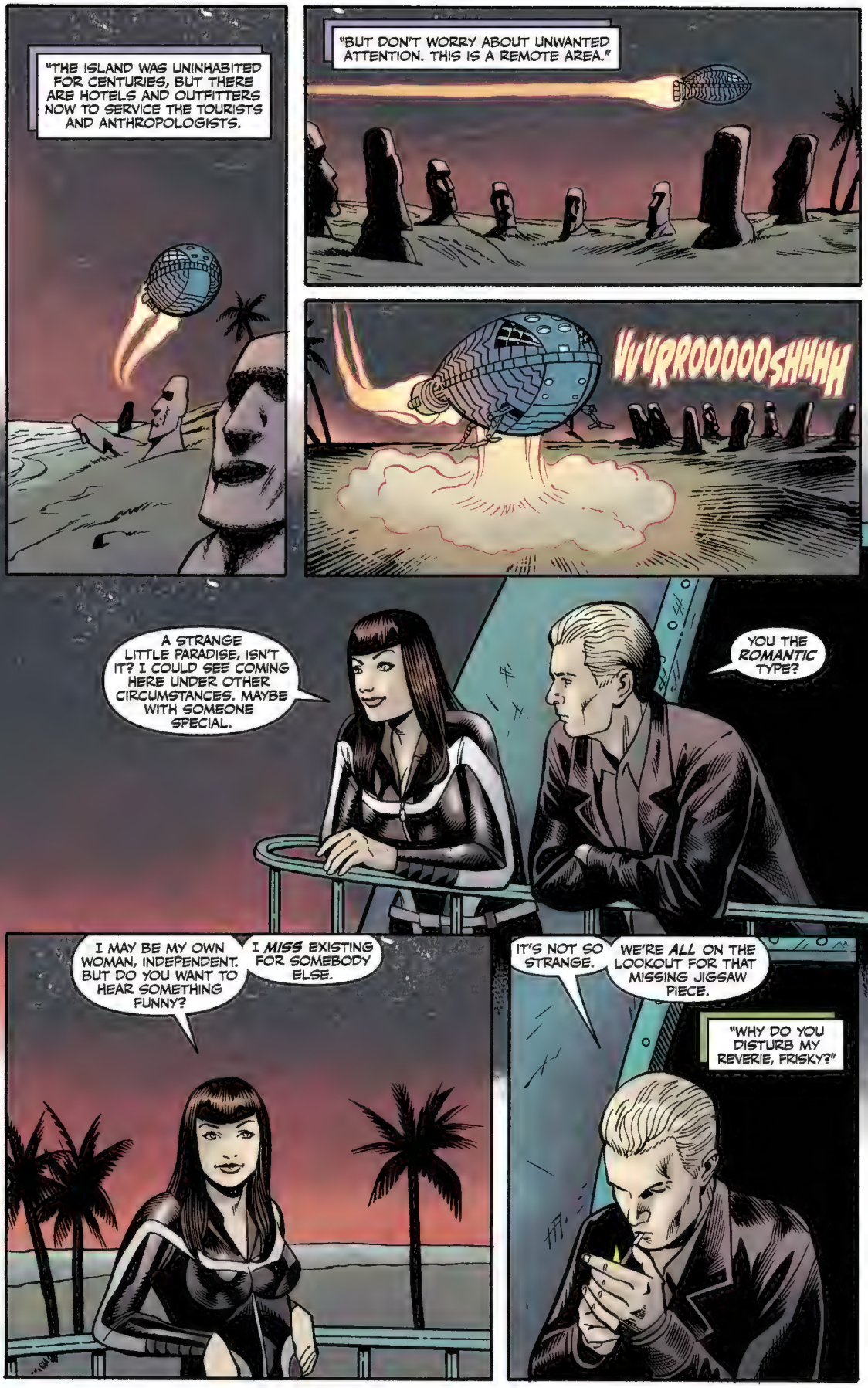
LOOK, AS SHOULDERS GO, YOURS LOOK SOFTER THAN AVERAGE, SO DON'T THINK I DON'T APPRECIATE IT.
BUT MY STYLE IS MORE STIFF UPPER LIP, STIFFER DRINK, AND SOLDIER ON.

SPIKE, OF COURSE I'M GRATEFUL THAT YOU'RE HELPING ME. BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT TOO.
YOU'RE SPECIAL. AND I THINK...I THINK WE--


MASTER, WE ARE BEGINNING OUR DESCENT AND WILL REENTER THE ATMOSPHERE SOON.

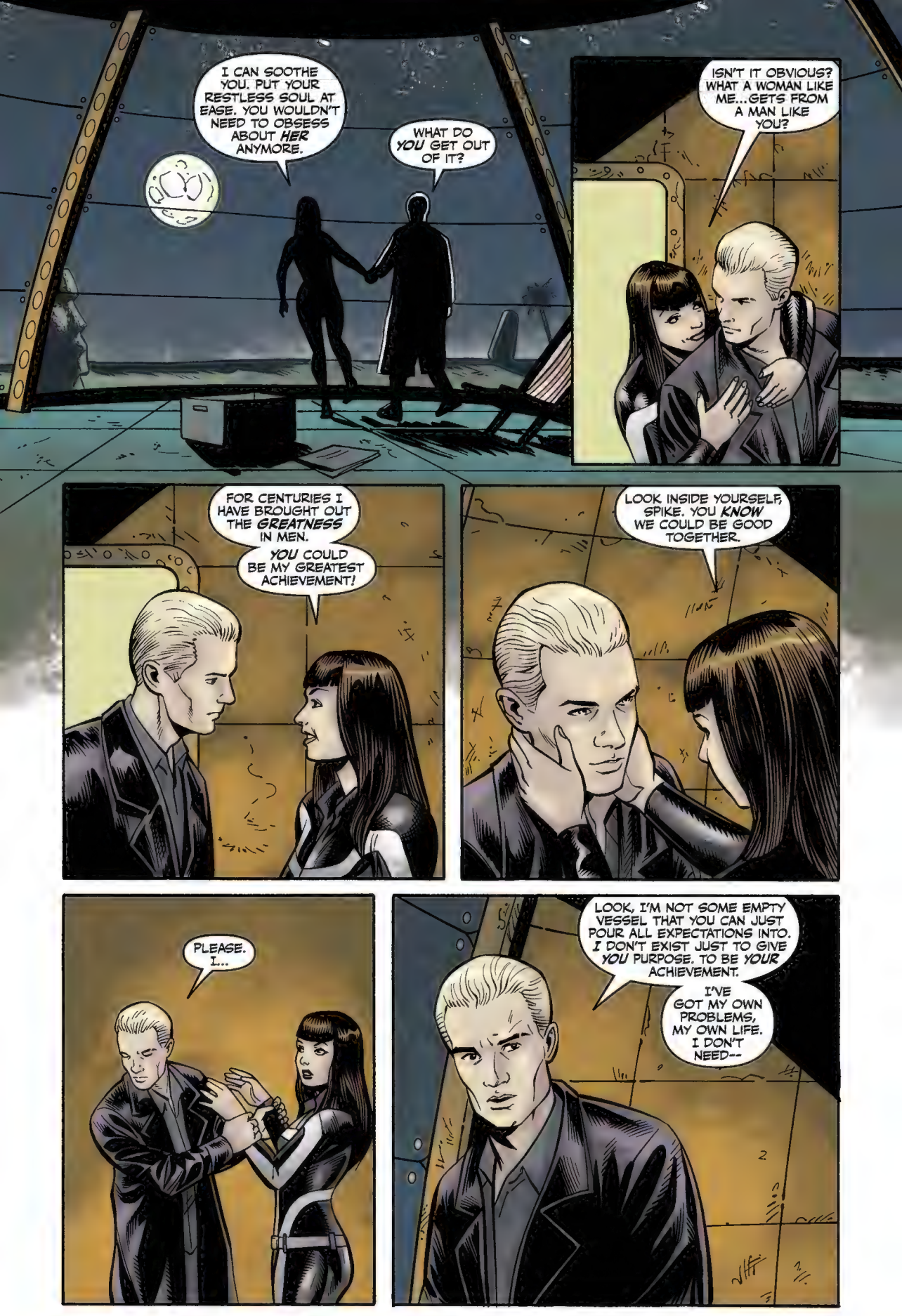
"WE ARE EN ROUTE TO THE...OTHER HELLMOUTH."
ARE WE JAMMING ALL SENSORY APPARATUS AS WE APPROACH?
BUT SEBASTIAN, WHY ARE WE AVOIDING THE SUBJECT WE MUST DISCUSS?
OF COURSE.
IT'S BEEN DISCUSSED. WE HAVE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS, BUT BEYOND THAT WE CAN ONLY WAIT.
AND WE ARE SIMPLY TO AID THIS WOMAN IN GAINING ACCESS TO A HELLMOUTH? CAN THAT BE GOOD?
WE CANNOT DEFY OUR MASTER FOR SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HAPPEN. UNLESS MASTER SPIKE ORDERS--
OI! WHAT'S THE NOISE, BUGS?
UH...
WE'RE ON FINAL APPROACH TO THE ISLAND NOW, MASTER.
I'VE SEEN MY SHARE OF HELLMOUTHS AND KNEW THERE WERE OTHERS HIDDEN 'ROUND THE WORLD...


"...BUT THOSE BIG, BLOCK-HEADED BUGGERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A DEAD GIVEAWAY."
THOSE STATUES RING THE ISLAND, FACING OUT TO SEA.
THE ANCIENT NATIVES WHO ERECTED THEM WERE WARNING PEOPLE AWAY. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE LIKELY TOO PRIMITIVE TO UNDERSTAND AWAY FROM WHAT.
I'VE GOT THREE BARS. A BIT SURPRISING OUT HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.

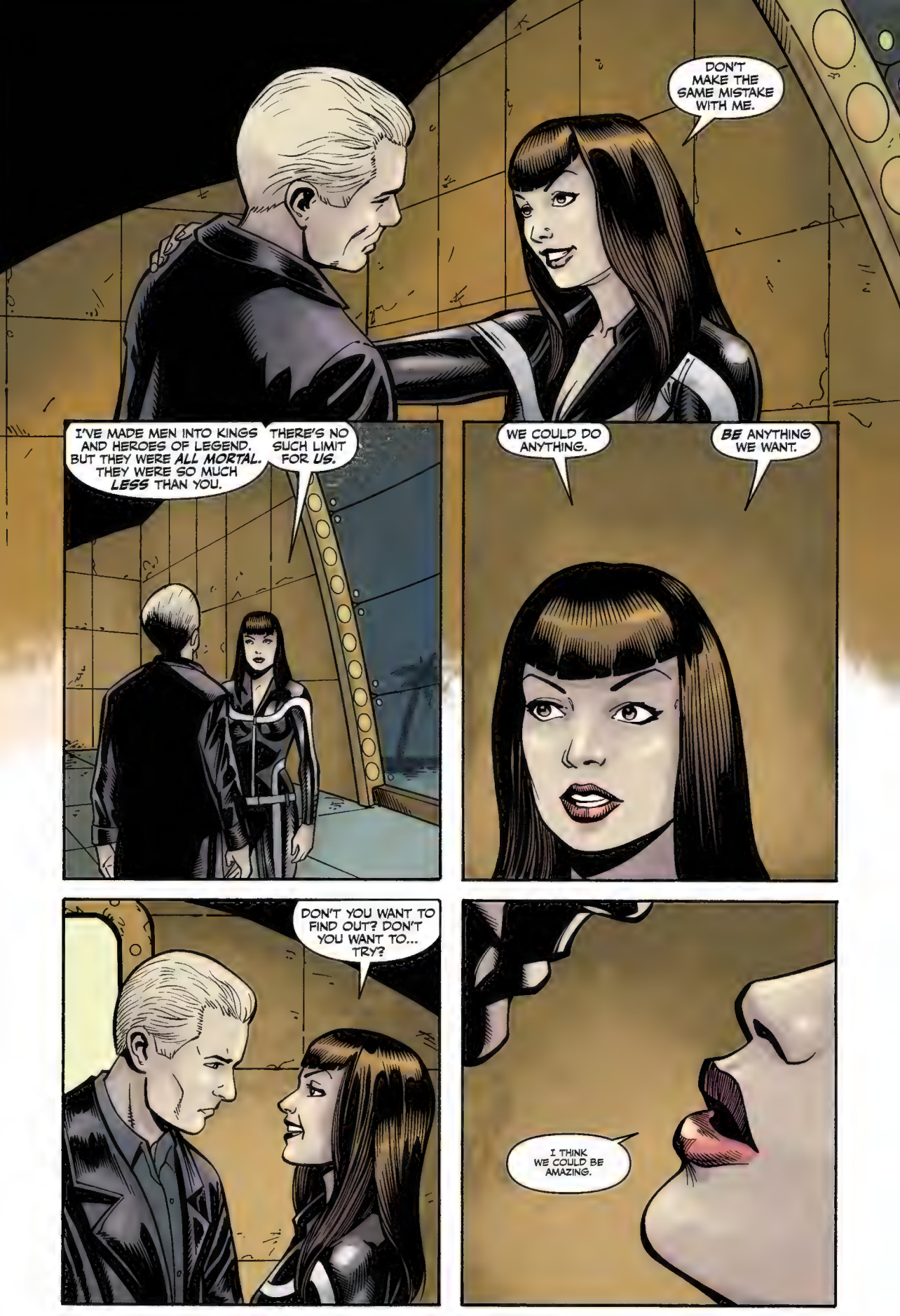

"THE ISLAND WAS UNINHABITED FOR CENTURIES, BUT THERE ARE HOTELS AND OUTFITTERS NOW TO SERVICE THE TOURISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS.
"BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT UNWANTED ATTENTION. THIS IS A REMOTE AREA."
VVVRROOOOOSHHHH
A STRANGE LITTLE PARADISE, ISN'T IT? I COULD SEE COMING HERE UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. MAYBE WITH SOMEONE SPECIAL.
YOU THE ROMANTIC TYPE?
I MAY BE MY OWN WOMAN, INDEPENDENT. BUT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR SOMETHING FUNNY?
I MISS EXISTING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.
IT'S NOT SO STRANGE.
WE'RE ALL ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THAT MISSING JIGSAW PIECE.
"WHY DO YOU DISTURB MY REVERIE, FRISKY?"

I FEAR MASTER SPIKE IS NO LONGER IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF HIMSELF.
IF YOU DO NOT ORDER SOMETHING DONE, THEN I SHALL. IF I AM PROVEN WRONG, THEN I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.
NO.
IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT OUR OBEDIENCE TO MASTER SPIKE IS ABSOLUTE.
I WAS AFRAID YOU MIGHT ASK FORGIVENESS LATER INSTEAD OF PERMISSION NOW. I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
I'M SORRY, FRISKY.
THIS GIVES ME NO PLEASURE, BUT YOU ARE--AS THE EARTHLINGS SAY--A LOOSE CANNON.
SEBASTIAN?
SEBASTIAN!
"YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ALONE, SPIKE."

WHO'S ALONE? THE BUGS AND I HAVE A VERY FULFILLING LIFE.
EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S CANASTA.
THE MORE DEVIL-MAY-CARE YOU ACT ON THE SURFACE, THE MORE I CAN SENSE THE PIECES OF YOU SCRAPED RAW UNDERNEATH.
WHY ARE YOU *TELLING* ME THIS? WHAT IS IT TO YOU?
YOU KNOW WHAT I AM. IT'S *NOT* SOMETHING I CAN TURN OFF.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ATTRACTED TO *POWERFUL* MEN. AND YOU'RE HURTING, SPIKE. I CAN SEE IT.
YOUR NEED IS LIKE... LIKE AN APHRODISIAC. I'M ALMOST DIZZY WITH IT. WITH ME...YOU COULD HEAL.
I THOUGHT YOU JUST WANTED TO GET BACK TO YOUR OWN DIMENSION.
THAT'S BECAUSE I HAD NO PURPOSE.
NOW I HAVE *YOU.*


I CAN SOOTHE YOU. PUT YOUR RESTLESS SOUL AT EASE. YOU WOULDN'T NEED TO OBSESS ABOUT *HER* ANYMORE.
WHAT DO *YOU* GET OUT OF IT?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? WHAT A WOMAN LIKE ME...GETS FROM A MAN LIKE YOU?
FOR CENTURIES I HAVE BROUGHT OUT THE *GREATNESS* IN MEN.
YOU COULD BE MY GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT!
LOOK INSIDE YOURSELF, SPIKE. YOU *KNOW* WE COULD BE GOOD TOGETHER.
PLEASE. I...
LOOK, I'M NOT SOME EMPTY VESSEL THAT YOU CAN JUST POUR ALL EXPECTATIONS INTO. I DON'T EXIST JUST TO GIVE *YOU* PURPOSE. TO BE *YOUR* ACHIEVEMENT.
I'VE GOT MY OWN PROBLEMS, MY OWN LIFE. I DON'T NEED--

I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHAT BUFFY MUST HAVE THOUGHT.
ALL THE PRESSURES OF BEING A SLAYER ON TOP OF THE EVERYDAY PRESSURES OF LIFE--FAMILY, FRIENDS, A JOB.
AND IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THAT YOU JUST WANTED TO LOVE HER.
MAYBE THAT'S A LOT FOR A GIRL TO TAKE...
BUFFY MADE A MISTAKE TURNING YOU AWAY.


DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE WITH ME.
I'VE MADE MEN INTO KINGS AND HEROES OF LEGEND. BUT THEY WERE ALL MORTAL. THEY WERE SO MUCH LESS THAN YOU.
THERE'S NO SUCH LIMIT FOR US.
WE COULD DO ANYTHING.
BE ANYTHING WE WANT.
DON'T YOU WANT TO FIND OUT? DON'T YOU WANT TO... TRY?
I THINK WE COULD BE AMAZING.

I'M... SORRY. I'LL HAVE TO TAKE A PASS.
EXCUSE ME?
EVERY PERFECT SECOND OF EVERY PERFECT DAY WOULD JUST BE A REMINDER THAT IT WASN'T... REAL.
WITH BUFFY, IT WAS UP AND DOWN AND FRUSTRATING AND CONFUSING. BUT REAL. I KNOW IT'S SICK IN THE HEAD...
BUT A PART OF ME CHERISHES EVERY MOMENT I'VE SPENT MISERABLE OVER HER.
LOOK, IT'S NOT *YOU*, IT'S ME. ANY OTHER BLOKE WOULD GIVE HIS RIGHT ARM.
I'M JUST NOT THE SORT TO--
SLAP

OW.
KINGS, PHARAOHS, EMPERORS, PRESIDENTS.
ONE POPE.
IN THREE MILLENNIA NO MAN HAS EVER *TAKEN A PASS.*
YOU'RE A SHORTSIGHTED BASTARD.
HEY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND. FRANKLY IT WAS YOUR MOJO THAT MADE ME GO ALL SELF-ANALYSIS.
SO GLAD I COULD HELP.
IF MY SERVICES ARE NO LONGER NEEDED, I THINK I'LL BE LEAVING. I'M GOING BACK TO MY OWN DIMENSION, WHICH IS WHAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THAT BRINGS US BACK TO SQUARE ONE. YOU *CAN'T* OPEN THIS HELLMOUTH WITHOUT MAGIC.
OF WHICH WE HAVE NONE.
AND IT'S A *BAD* IDEA ANYWAY. IN A WORLD WITH *ALL* MAGICAL DEFENSES ON THE FRITZ, I CAN THINK OF NO FASTER WAY TO MAKE ALL OF REALITY GO BOOM.
I'LL MANAGE.

THERE'S NOTHING TO MANAGE, MORGAN.
EVERYONE'S LOOKING FOR SCRAPS OF HOCUS-POCUS. EVEN THE BLOODY FISH DEMONS.
YOU KNOW THIS ALREADY. YOU LOOKED FOR A SEED SHARD YOURSELF. YOU WERE THERE AHEAD OF US AND SEARCHED AND...
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU--
YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T OPEN THE HELLMOUTH WITHOUT MAGIC, BUT YOU HAD ME BRING YOU HERE ANYWAY.
L-LET GO OF ME.
WHERE IS IT?

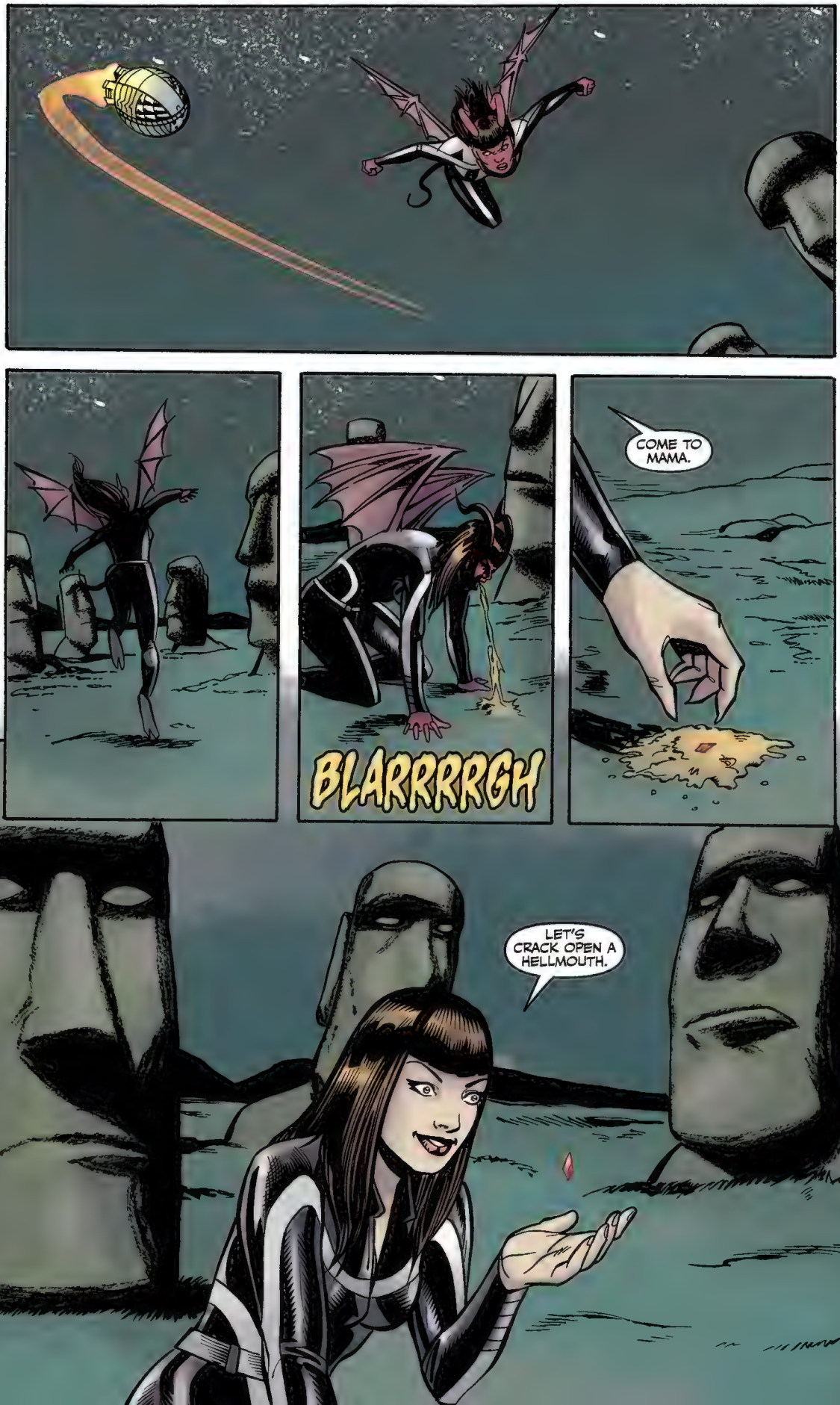
IT'S BECAUSE YOU DO HAVE A SHARD.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING--
YOU HAD IT ALL ALONG. IT WAS OBVIOUS, BUT I WAS BLIND TO IT. I LET MYSELF BE TAKEN IN BY CHEAP SUCCUBUS TRICKS.
I. SAID. LET. ME--
GO!
WHAP
NO MORE SMOKE IN THESE EYES, LUV.
AND IF YOU THINK I'M LETTING YOU OPEN A HELLMOUTH AND PLUNGE THE ENTIRE WORLD INTO HORROR--
YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR BLOODY MIND!

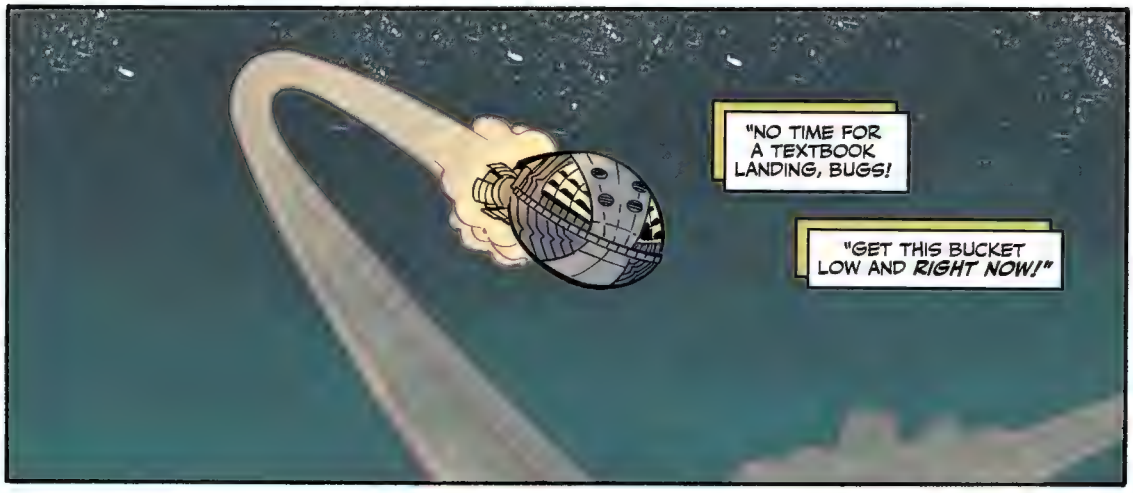
I WANT *IMMEDIATE* LIFTOFF. WE MUST IMPLEMENT THE CONTINGENCY PLAN.
AND RELEASE FRISKY FROM THE BRIG.
IF YOU THINK I'VE COME THIS FAR TO BE STOPPED NOW, THEN *YOU'RE* THE ONE OUT OF YOUR MIND.
FWAK
FWUP
GAH!
GNRRAAAHH
SHRRIP

THE WEAPON IS READY?
FULLY CHARGED.
FIRE!
POOM
WHAT THE--?!
IDIOT INSECTS!
I'LL RIP YOUR LIMBS OFF ONE AT A--
VzZZZZZT

THAT WAS THE FULL VOLTAGE?
YES. IT OVERLOADED THE WEAPON.
SHWIK
SKRRRIP
?!

KRASH
I DID NOT KNOW SHE WOULD DO THAT.
DID YOU KNOW SHE WOULD DO THAT?
I DID NOT.
GET US DOWN THERE NOW.

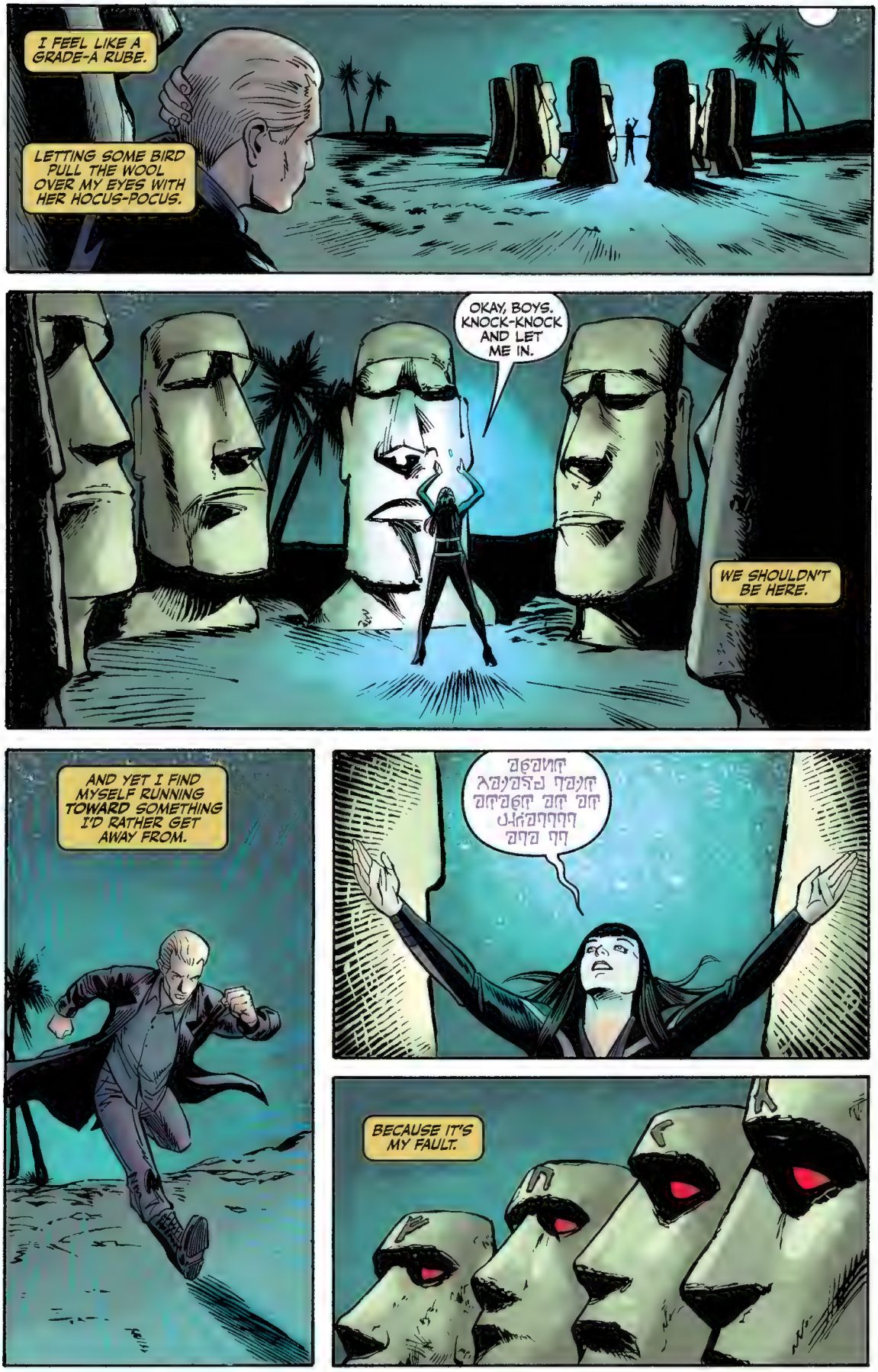

COME TO MAMA.
BLARRRRGH
LET'S CRACK OPEN A HELLMOUTH.



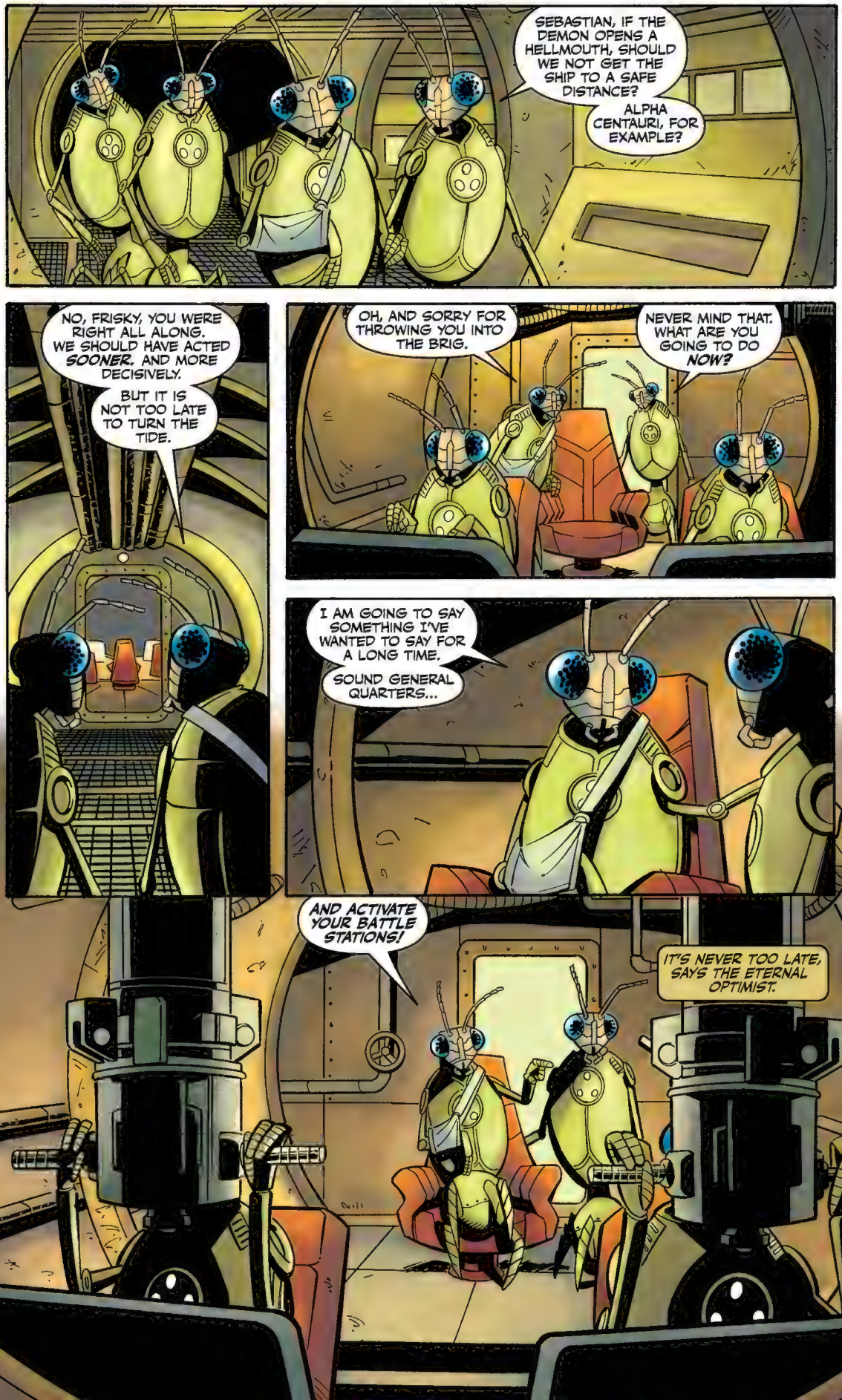
A DARK PLACE

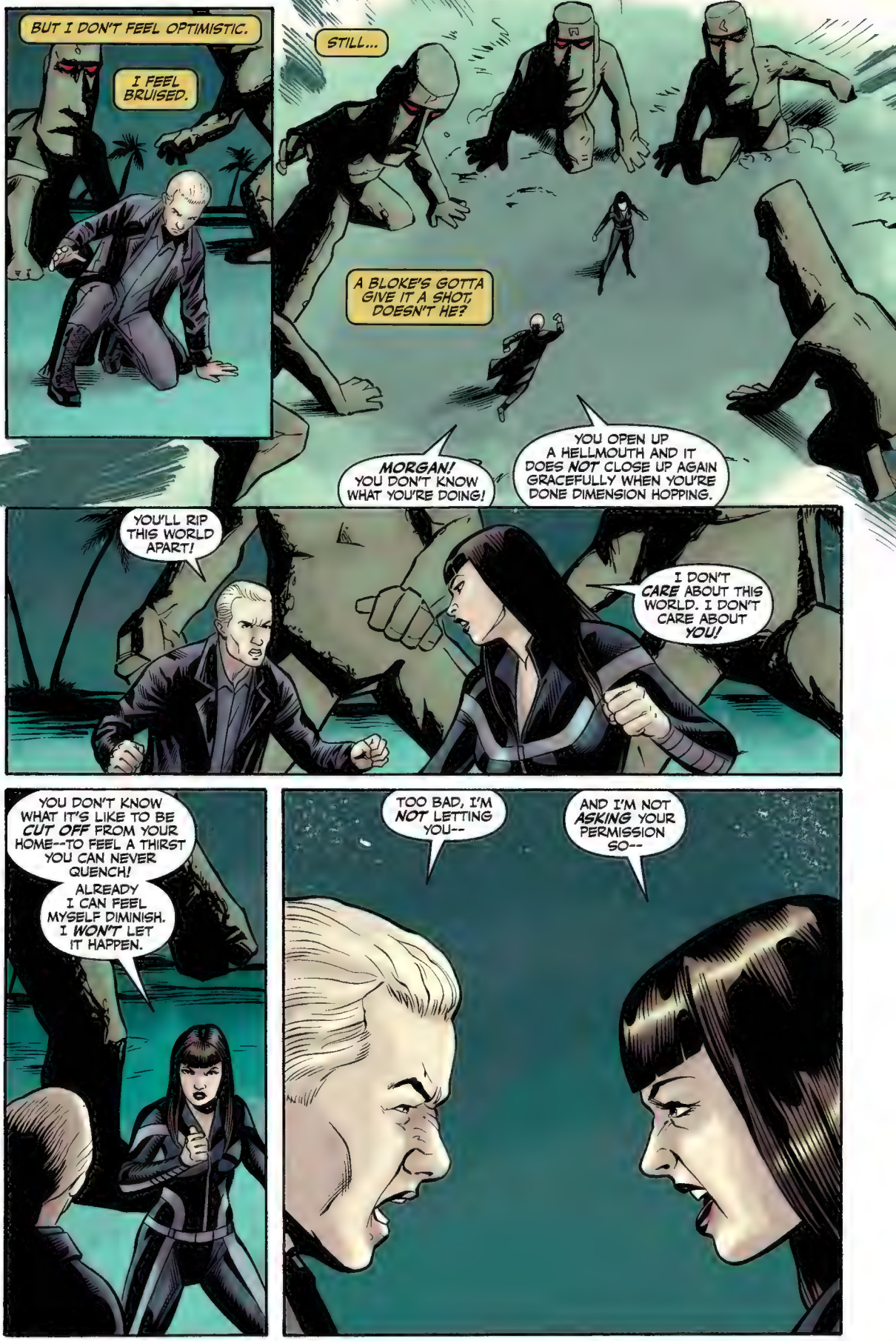
PART 5 OF 5

MAYBE I'M THE BLOODY LUNATIC.
SWACH
KRAK
FUMP
OOF
KLONK
SON OF A--

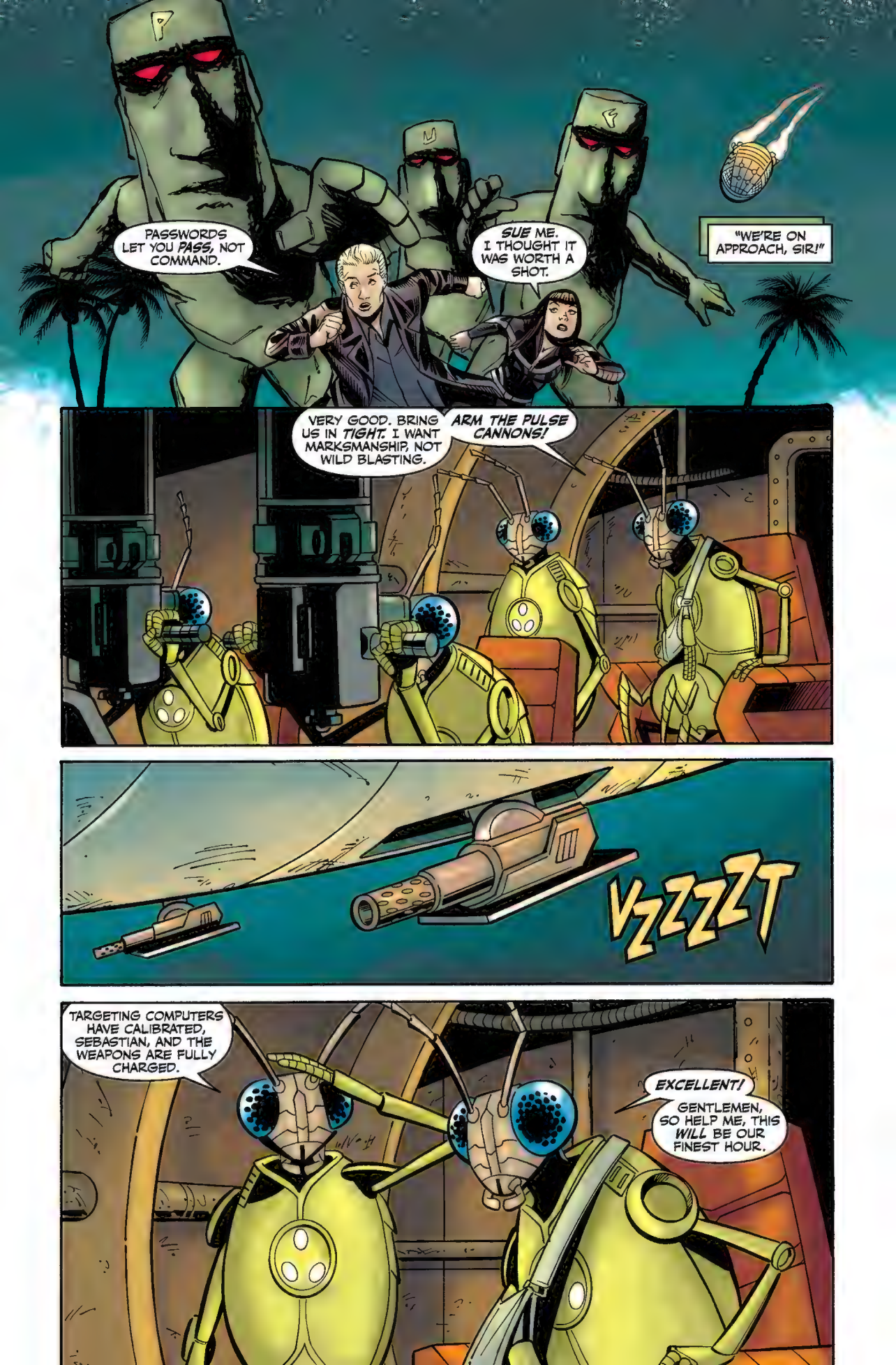

I FEEL LIKE A GRADE-A RUBE.
LETTING SOME BIRD PULL THE WOOL OVER MY EYES WITH HER HOCUS-POCUS.
OKAY, BOYS. KNOCK-KNOCK AND LET ME IN.
WE SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
AND YET I FIND MYSELF RUNNING TOWARD SOMETHING I'D RATHER GET AWAY FROM.
BECAUSE IT'S MY FAULT.

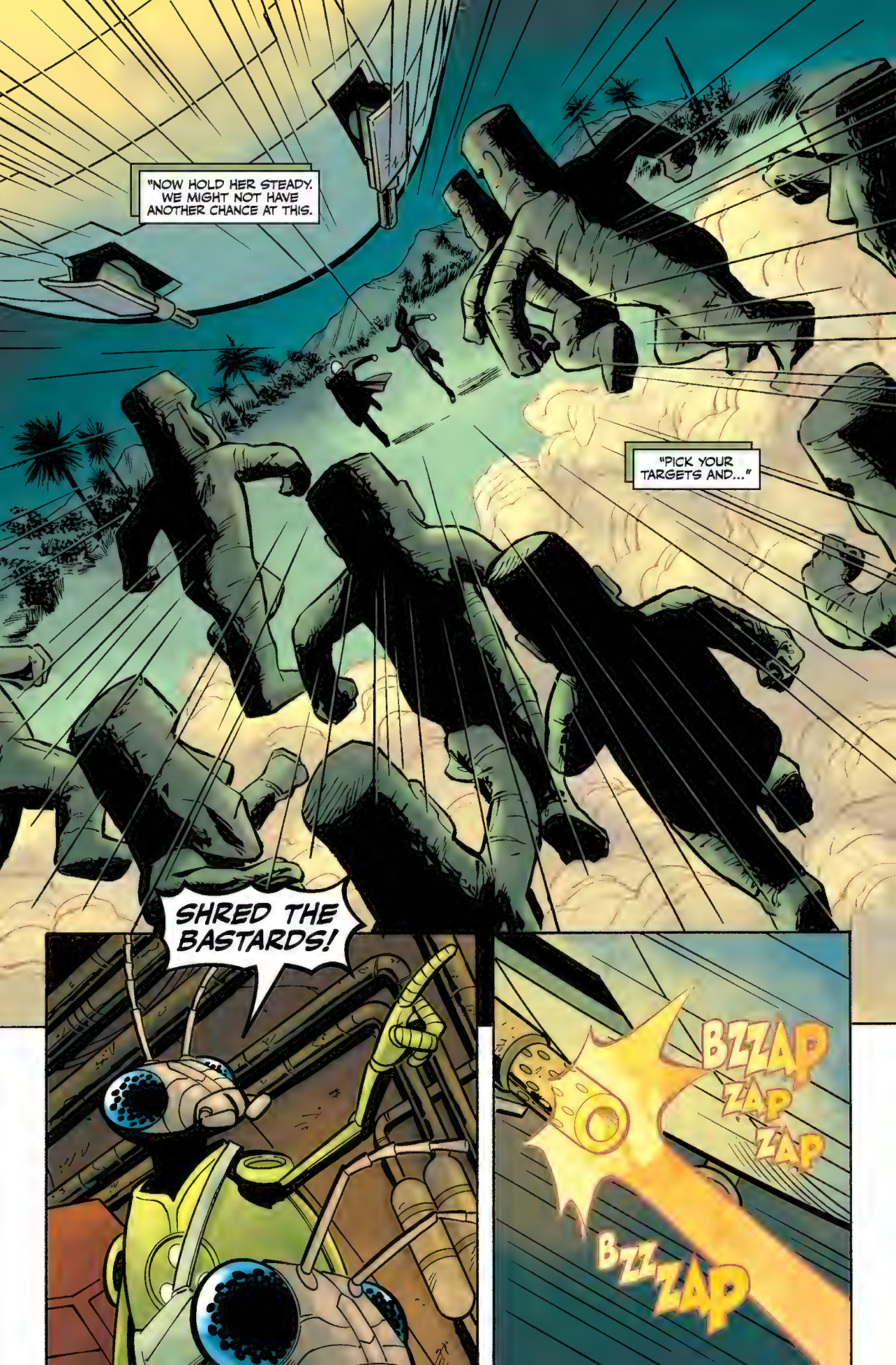
AND AS THE PHILOSOPHERS SAY, YOU BREAK IT, MATE, YOU BOUGHT IT.
HEAR ME, GUARDIANS! I HAVE SPOKEN THE ANCIENT PASSWORDS.
AND I COMMAND YOU TO OPEN THIS HELLMOUTH!
MORGAN, STOP! IF YOU DO THIS--
"WE MUST AID MASTER SPIKE!
"TO THE COCKPIT!"
FWAM


SEBASTIAN, IF THE DEMON OPENS A HELLMOUTH, SHOULD WE NOT GET THE SHIP TO A SAFE DISTANCE?
ALPHA CENTAURI, FOR EXAMPLE?
NO, FRISKY, YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG. WE SHOULD HAVE ACTED SOONER, AND MORE DECISIVELY.
BUT IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO TURN THE TIDE.
OH, AND SORRY FOR THROWING YOU INTO THE BRIG.
NEVER MIND THAT. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
I AM GOING TO SAY SOMETHING I'VE WANTED TO SAY FOR A LONG TIME.
SOUND GENERAL QUARTERS...
AND ACTIVATE YOUR BATTLE STATIONS!
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE, SAYS THE ETERNAL OPTIMIST.


BUT I DON'T FEEL OPTIMISTIC.
I FEEL BRUISED.
STILL...
A BLOKE'S GOTTA GIVE IT A SHOT, DOESN'T HE?
MORGAN! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
YOU OPEN UP A HELLMOUTH AND IT DOES NOT CLOSE UP AGAIN GRACEFULLY WHEN YOU'RE DONE DIMENSION HOPPING.
YOU'LL RIP THIS WORLD APART!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THIS WORLD. I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU!
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE CUT OFF FROM YOUR HOME--TO FEEL A THIRST YOU CAN NEVER QUENCH!
ALREADY I CAN FEEL MYSELF DIMINISH. I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN.
TOO BAD, I'M NOT LETTING YOU--
AND I'M NOT ASKING YOUR PERMISSION SO--

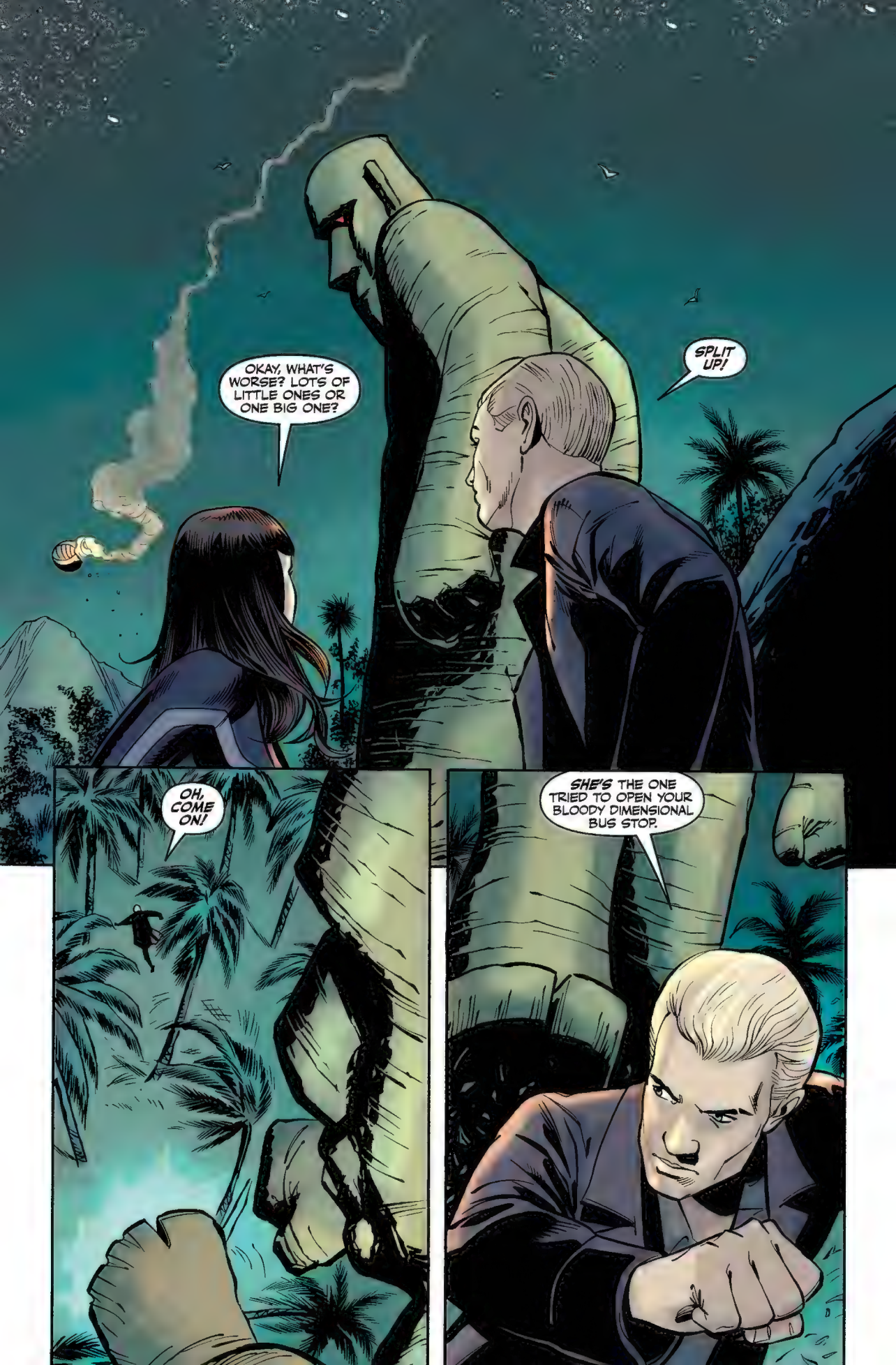
WHAM
SO YOU'RE COMMANDING THEM, ARE YOU?
SHUT UP!


PASSWORDS LET YOU *PASS*, NOT COMMAND.
SUE ME. I THOUGHT IT WAS WORTH A SHOT.
"WE'RE ON APPROACH, SIR!"
VERY GOOD. BRING US IN *TIGHT*. I WANT MARKSMANSHIP, NOT WILD BLASTING.
ARM THE PULSE CANNONS!
VZZZZT
TARGETING COMPUTERS HAVE CALIBRATED, SEBASTIAN, AND THE WEAPONS ARE FULLY CHARGED.
EXCELLENT!
GENTLEMEN, SO HELP ME, THIS *WILL* BE OUR FINEST HOUR.


"NOW HOLD HER STEADY. WE MIGHT NOT HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE AT THIS.
"PICK YOUR TARGETS AND..."
SHRED THE BASTARDS!
BZZAP
ZAP
ZAP
BZZ
ZAP

BZZZAP
ZAPP
BZZZAP
BLABOOM
WHAPOOM
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
BUG CAVALRY, BABY!
YOU HAD TO TRY TO OPEN A HELLMOUTH.
I'M SORRY, OKAY?

"WHAT THE #@%$ IS THAT?"
SIR, I BELIEVE IT IS AN AMALGAM OF ALL THE SMALLER EASTER ISLAND HEAD STATUES.
I KNOW! IT WAS A RHETORICAL EXCLAMATION INTENDED TO EXPRESS MY PANICKED DISPLEASURE!
WE NEED TO PULL UP! WE NEED TO PULL UP!
KEEP FIRING!
BZZAP BZZAP
KRONK

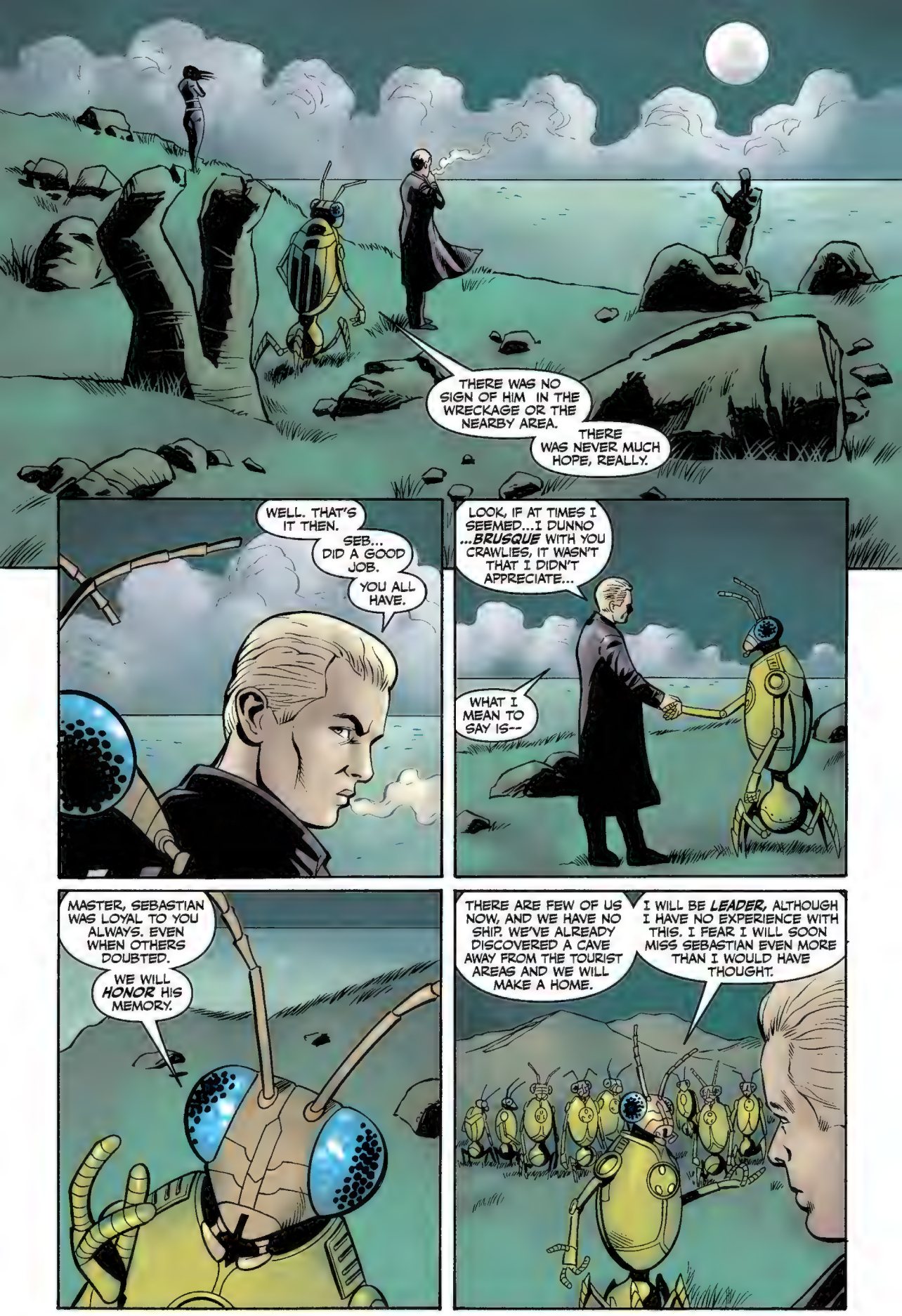

OKAY, WHAT'S WORSE? LOTS OF LITTLE ONES OR ONE BIG ONE?
SPLIT UP!
OH, COME ON!
SHE'S THE ONE TRIED TO OPEN YOUR BLOODY DIMENSIONAL BUS STOP.

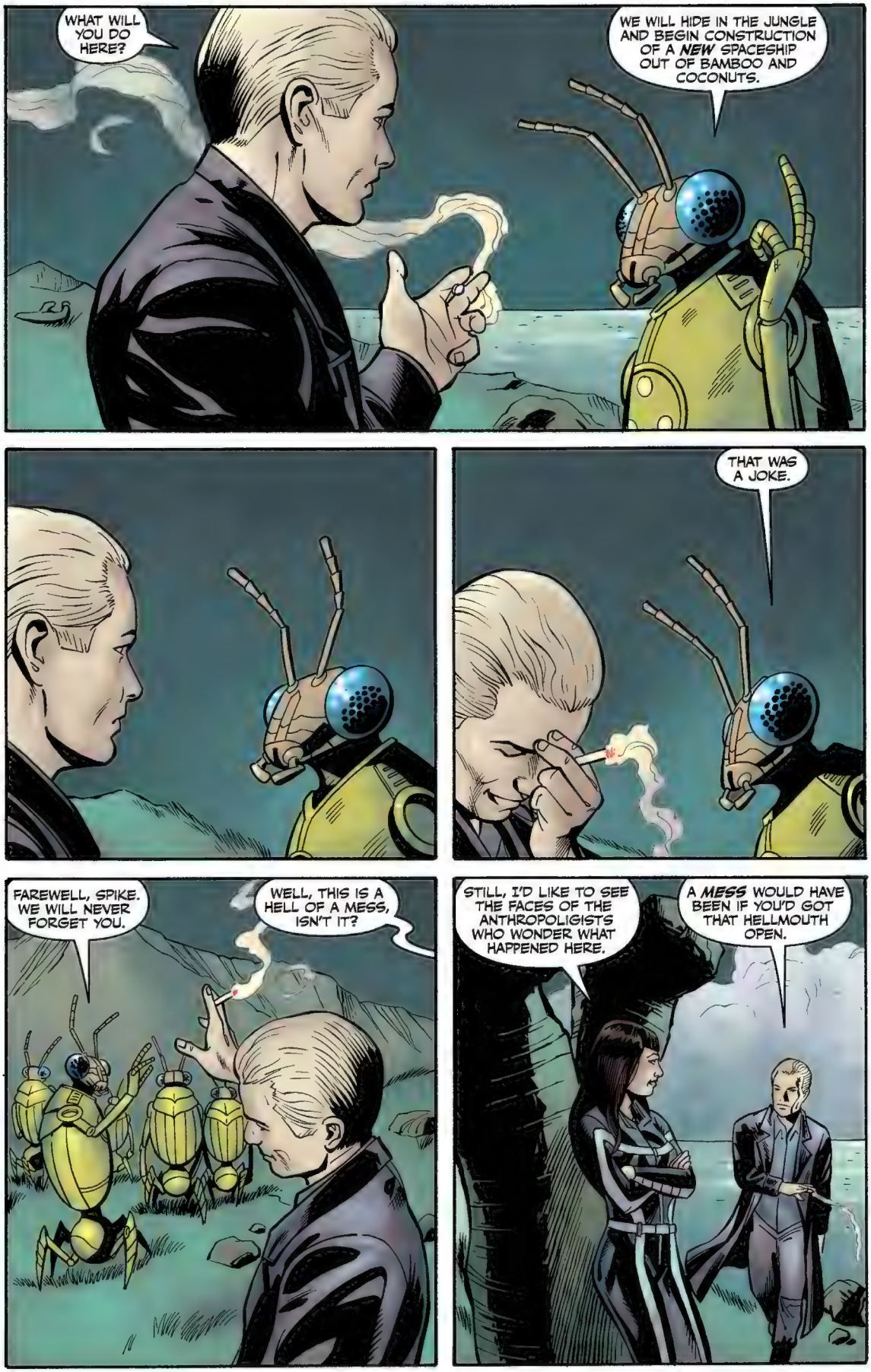
FOOM
BUGGER.
"IT'S NO USE, SEBASTIAN. WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING."

WE ARE LOSING POWER, AND THE ENGINE CORE WILL SUPERHEAT AT ANY MOMENT.
THEN THERE IS NO TIME TO LOSE. ABANDON SHIP IMMEDIATELY.
EVERYONE TO YOUR ESCAPE PODS!
SEBASTIAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WE BOTH KNOW WE CAN'T JETTISON THE ESCAPE PODS UNLESS SOMEBODY KEEPS THE SHIP RELATIVELY STABLE.
YOU WILL NOT SURVIVE!
NO, FRISKY. BUT YOU AND THE OTHERS WILL.
THIS IS NOT WHAT MASTER SPIKE WOULD WANT.
WHO KNOWS WHAT ANYONE WANTS IN THESE TRYING TIMES, BUT IT'S AS YOU ONCE TOLD ME, FRISKY. BETTER TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS THAN PERMISSION.
EXCEPT IT SEEMS YOU WILL HAVE TO ASK FORGIVENESS ON MY BEHALF. GO NOW!
FAREWELL, SEBASTIAN.
I HOPE WE MEET AGAIN IN THAT GREAT HIVE OF THE BEYOND.
COMPUTER, BEGIN BLACK BOX LOG RECORDING.
I AM THE ONE DUBBED BY THE MASTER AS SEBASTIAN, LEADER OF THIS EXPEDITION...

"...AND THIS IS MY FINAL ENTRY."
HWOMM
YOU NICK-OF-TIMED THAT ONE.
I OWED YOU THAT.
UH, HIGHER, PLEASE!
I DON'T USUALLY CARRY PASSENGERS.
WHAT THE BLOODY HELL'S THAT BUG SHIP--
OH NO.
"IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO LEAD MY CREW AND TO SERVE MASTER SPIKE."

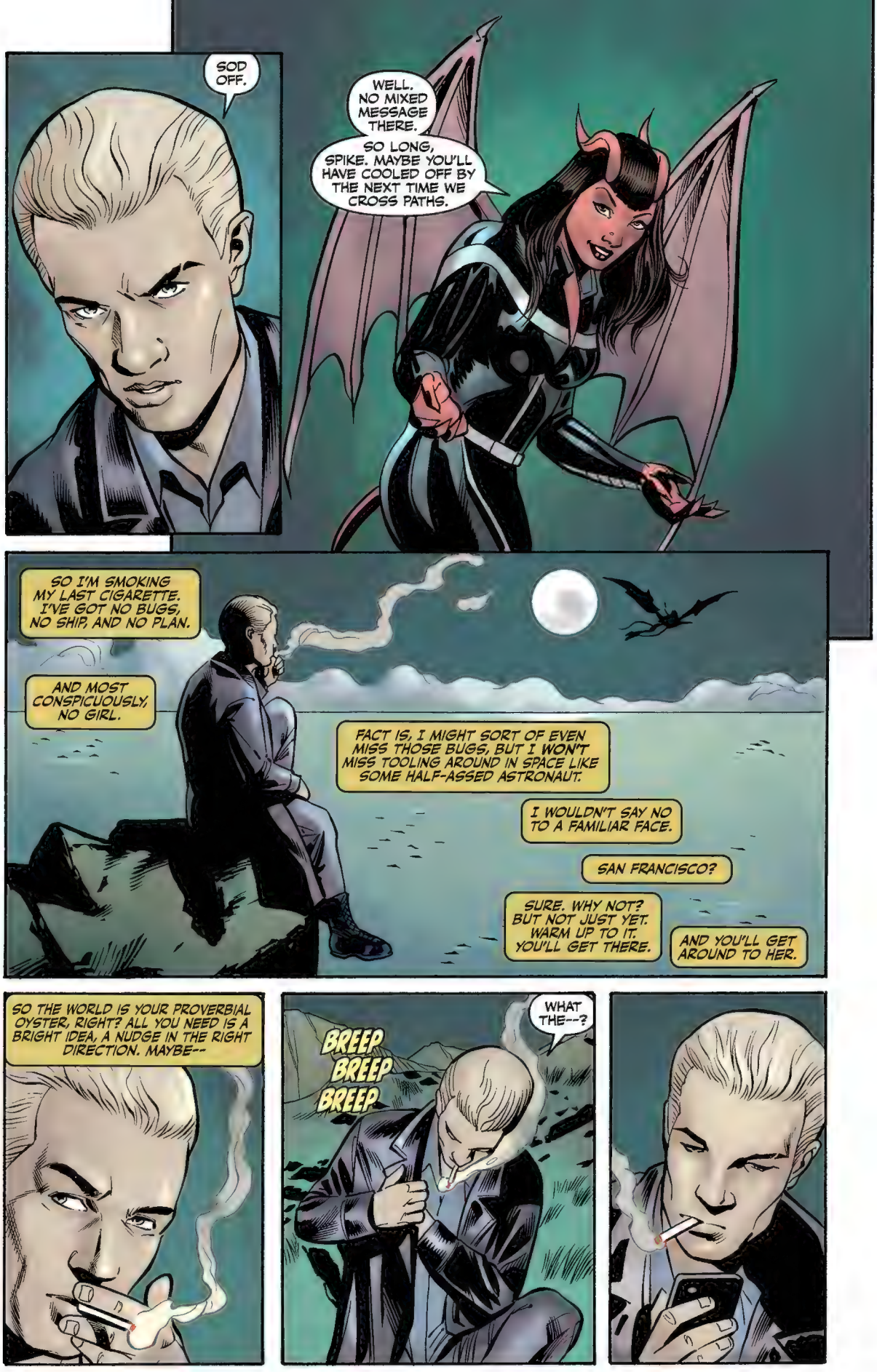
GOODBYE.
FWABOOM
"WE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE FOR SEBASTIAN, MASTER SPIKE."

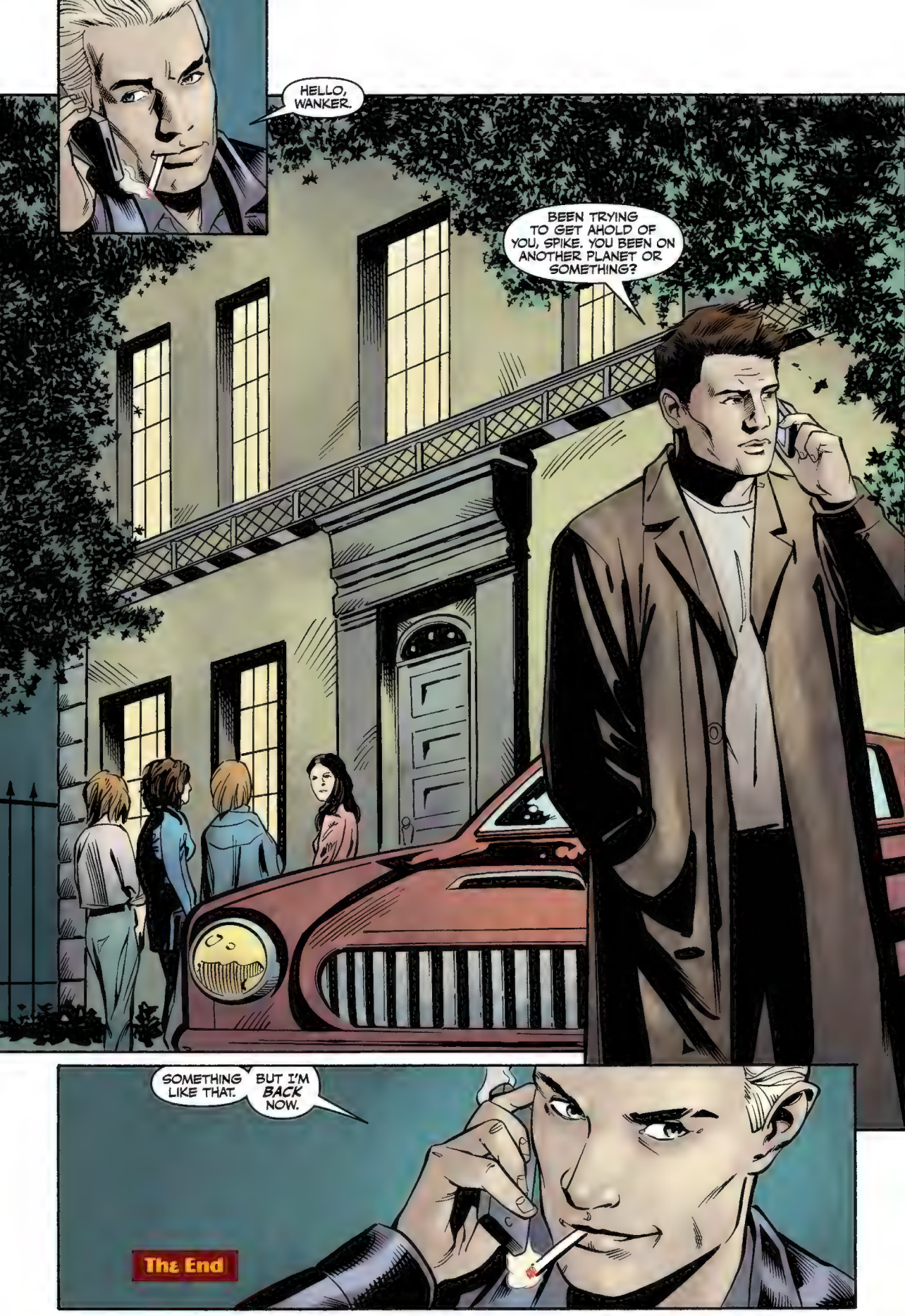

THERE WAS NO SIGN OF HIM IN THE WRECKAGE OR THE NEARBY AREA.
THERE WAS NEVER MUCH HOPE, REALLY.
WELL. THAT'S IT THEN.
SEB... DID A GOOD JOB.
YOU ALL HAVE.
LOOK, IF AT TIMES I SEEMED...I DUNNO ...BRUSQUE WITH YOU CRAWLIES, IT WASN'T THAT I DIDN'T APPRECIATE...
WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS--
MASTER, SEBASTIAN WAS LOYAL TO YOU ALWAYS. EVEN WHEN OTHERS DOUBTED.
WE WILL HONOR HIS MEMORY.
THERE ARE FEW OF US NOW, AND WE HAVE NO SHIP. WE'VE ALREADY DISCOVERED A CAVE AWAY FROM THE TOURIST AREAS AND WE WILL MAKE A HOME.
I WILL BE LEADER, ALTHOUGH I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WITH THIS. I FEAR I WILL SOON MISS SEBASTIAN EVEN MORE THAN I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT.


WHAT WILL YOU DO HERE?
WE WILL HIDE IN THE JUNGLE AND BEGIN CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SPACESHIP OUT OF BAMBOO AND COCONUTS.
THAT WAS A JOKE.
FAREWELL, SPIKE. WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.
WELL, THIS IS A HELL OF A MESS, ISN'T IT?
STILL, I'D LIKE TO SEE THE FACES OF THE ANTHROPOLIGISTS WHO WONDER WHAT HAPPENED HERE.
A MESS WOULD HAVE BEEN IF YOU'D GOT THAT HELLMOUTH OPEN.

YEAH, SORRY ABOUT THAT...
FRANKLY IF YOU'D BEEN MORE OPEN TO OUR PARTNERSHIP, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY, YOU KNOW.
GET REAL IN THE HEAD. THERE WAS NEVER GOING TO BE AN US.
NO. I GUESS NOT.
BUT I DID MEAN IT, SPIKE. WE COULD HAVE BEEN THIS CENTURY'S POWER COUPLE.
WHEN I FOUND MYSELF DISCONNECTED FROM MY HOME, I WANTED TO RECONNECT TO SOMETHING ELSE.
TO YOU.
BUT THERE'S NO WAY TO GET TO YOU WITHOUT GETTING PAST HER.
I CAN'T COMPETE WITH A MEMORY.

LET'S NOT GLOSS OVER THE FACT YOU JERKED ME AROUND.
BUT I KNOW WHAT SHE MEANS. ABOUT WANTING TO CONNECT.
I USED TO HAVE A SPACESHIP. I COULD LITERALLY GO ANYWHERE IN THE GALAXY.
ANYWHERE BUT WHERE I WANTED TO BE MOST OF ALL.
AND THAT'S HOW YOU END UP DRUNK ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON.
SO LOOK. I MESSED UP.
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN MANIPULATING YOU WOULD TURN OUT BAD. I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT THE USUAL SAP, RIGHT?
SO HOW ABOUT IT? A FRESH START?
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT. SHE DESERVES A PROPER ANSWER.


SOD OFF.
WELL. NO MIXED MESSAGE THERE.
SO LONG, SPIKE. MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE COOLED OFF BY THE NEXT TIME WE CROSS PATHS.
SO I'M SMOKING MY LAST CIGARETTE. I'VE GOT NO BUGS, NO SHIP, AND NO PLAN.
AND MOST CONSPICUOUSLY, NO GIRL.
FACT IS, I MIGHT SORT OF EVEN MISS THOSE BUGS, BUT I WON'T MISS TOOLING AROUND IN SPACE LIKE SOME HALF-ASSED ASTRONAUT.
I WOULDN'T SAY NO TO A FAMILIAR FACE.
SAN FRANCISCO?
SURE. WHY NOT? BUT NOT JUST YET. WARM UP TO IT. YOU'LL GET THERE.
AND YOU'LL GET AROUND TO HER.
SO THE WORLD IS YOUR PROVERBIAL OYSTER, RIGHT? ALL YOU NEED IS A BRIGHT IDEA, A NUDGE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. MAYBE--
BREEP BREEP BREEP
WHAT THE--?

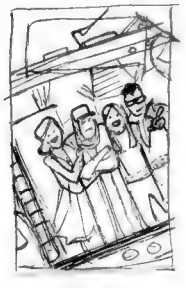

HELLO, WANKER.
BEEN TRYING TO GET AHOLD OF YOU, SPIKE. YOU BEEN ON ANOTHER PLANET OR SOMETHING?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
BUT I'M *BACK* NOW.
The End

ANGEL & FAITH™

SEASON 9 SKETCHBOOK AND COVER GALLERY

Featuring art by REBEKAH ISAACS *with*

STEVE MORRIS DAVID LAPHAM PAUL LEE JO CHEN



Above: Initial thumbnail sketches and cover pencils for the *Angel & Faith* #11 variant cover.

Opposite: Angel & Faith #11 variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Rebekah Isaacs and colors by Dan Jackson.

HOLLYWOOD

PAGE 1:

PANEL ONE: Picking up where we left off last issue, FAITH and ANGEL are at the door, surprised to see WILLOW standing there with the broken scythe.

1) ANGEL: Willow?

2) WILLOW: Andrew said you wanted to talk. Don't tell me he confused his fan fiction with reality again.

3) ANGEL: No, I just thought you'd…y'know, call.

PANEL TWO: TITLE (gutter between panels)

4) TITLE: FAMILY REUNION, PART 1

PANEL THREE: Willow walks in, past Angel (who moves aside to let her in – she makes him pretty nervous).

5) WILLOW: It sounded like a "not over the phone" kinda thing. Besides, I was in the neighborhood. Ye Olde Quest to Restore Magic took me to Stonehenge.

6) WILLOW: Which is now just kind of a boring pile of rocks, by the way.

PANEL FOUR: Willow walks in and greets Faith. Angel shuts the door behind him…not slamming it on purpose, but giving it a shove with his vampire superstrength and it shuts pretty hard.

7) WILLOW: Faith.

8) FAITH: Wil. Everybody good?

PANEL FIVE: Faith and Willow have never been BFFs, but it's a friendly enough greeting, though no hugs. Probably just a smile and a nod.

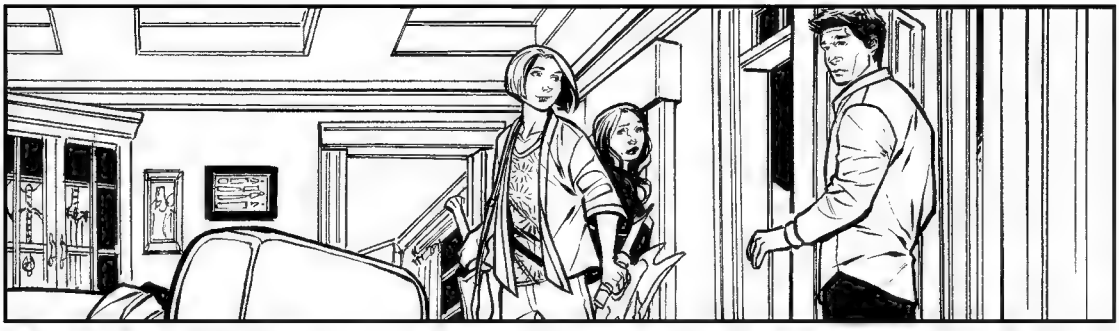
9) WILLOW: Still alive. Still wacky. You?

10) FAITH: Y'know. Brooding. Bad decisions. Violence. Rinse and repeat.

In *Buffy* Season 9, Willow sets out on an ambitious quest to find magic (which had mostly been wiped out in the aftermath of Season 8). She joins forces with Angel and Faith once she realizes that Angel's son can support her efforts to gain access to another dimension. Here is a great example of Christos Gage's scripts and Rebekah's final art.

Script and pencils for *Angel & Faith* #11, page 1. Script by Christos Gage, pencils by Rebekah Isaacs.

Opposite: Inks for *Angel & Faith* #11, page 1, by Rebekah Isaacs.



PAGE 14

PANEL ONE: Reverse angle so we're looking past Angel and Gunn through the windshield at CONNOR standing on the sidewalk beside a generic college campus. (Probably a state school, like UCLA, but I think we should avoid rooting it in a specific real place.) He's waving goodbye to his girlfriend – a nice, normal, cute girl his age – as they walk in different directions. He's got some sort of shoulder bag – not a backpack, more like a leather messenger bag. He's more mature than your garden-variety frat boy. He looks happy and together.

1) ANGEL: Is…is that his girlfriend?

2) GUNN: Natalie. Also majoring in social work. They've been together three months.

3) ANGEL: Look at him. He seems so…

PANEL TWO: Pull the camera back into the back seat (but so we can still see Connor through the windshield). Angel turns to Willow. He's having second thoughts. Seen through the car windshield, Connor looks up, like he's heard something. He's noticing them…sensing Angel.

4) ANGEL: Willow…

5) WILLOW: No. You are not backing out on me now.

PANEL THREE: Faith points to where Connor has vanished from where he stood a moment ago. (We see the same thing through the windshield we did in the last panel but Connor is gone.)

6) ANGEL: He's got his life together.

7) WILLOW: We flew across an ocean!

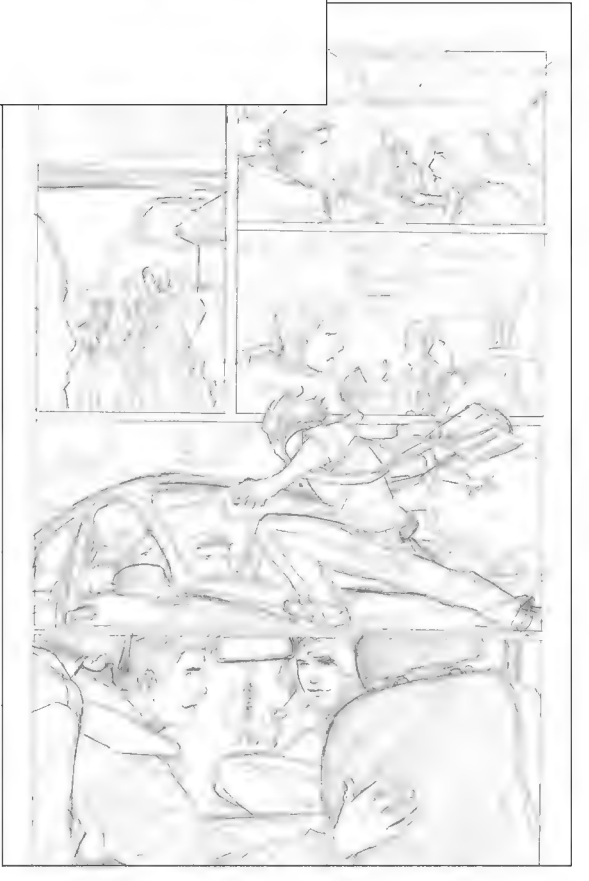
8) FAITH: Hey, where the hell did he--

PANEL FOUR: Connor lands on the hood of the car like Spider-Man, crouched down, looking in at them. Is he pissed? Does he think they're enemies? Is there going to be a fight? It's hard to tell because Connor's body language is poised and ready for anything.

9) SFX: THUD

PANEL FIVE: Connor and Angel look at each other through the windshield. Connor is incredulous and confused. No hostility, just bafflement.

10) CONNOR: Are you wearing a hoodie?



From the start of Season 9, Christos nailed the distinctive voices and characteristics of these beloved characters. The subtle action in these pages showcases sequential storytelling at its best.

Script and pencils for *Angel & Faith* #11, page 14. Script by Christos Gage, pencils by Rebekah Isaacs.

Opposite: Inks for *Angel & Faith* #11, page 14, by Rebekah Isaacs.

A

B

C

D

Angel & Faith #12 final variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Rebekah Isaacs and colors by Dan Jackson.

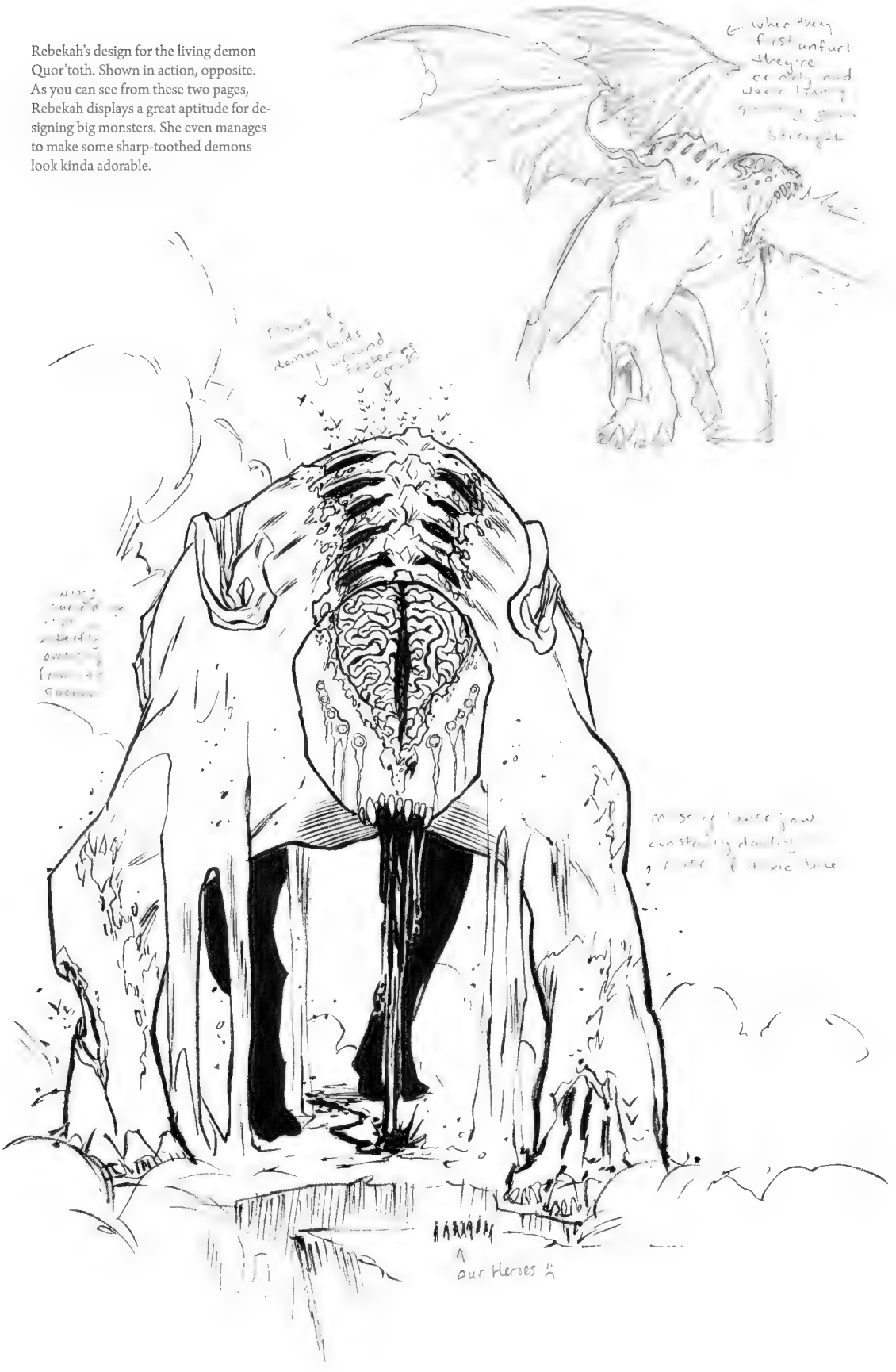
Opposite: Initial thumbnail sketches and cover inks for the *Angel & Faith* #12 variant cover.

Above: In Quor'toth, Angel, Faith, and the gang discover that Connor and his adoptive father, Daniel Holtz, have become figures of legend and worship. This is Rebekah's concept for Connor the Destroyer.

Opposite: Inks for *Angel & Faith* #12, page 7, by Rebekah Isaacs.

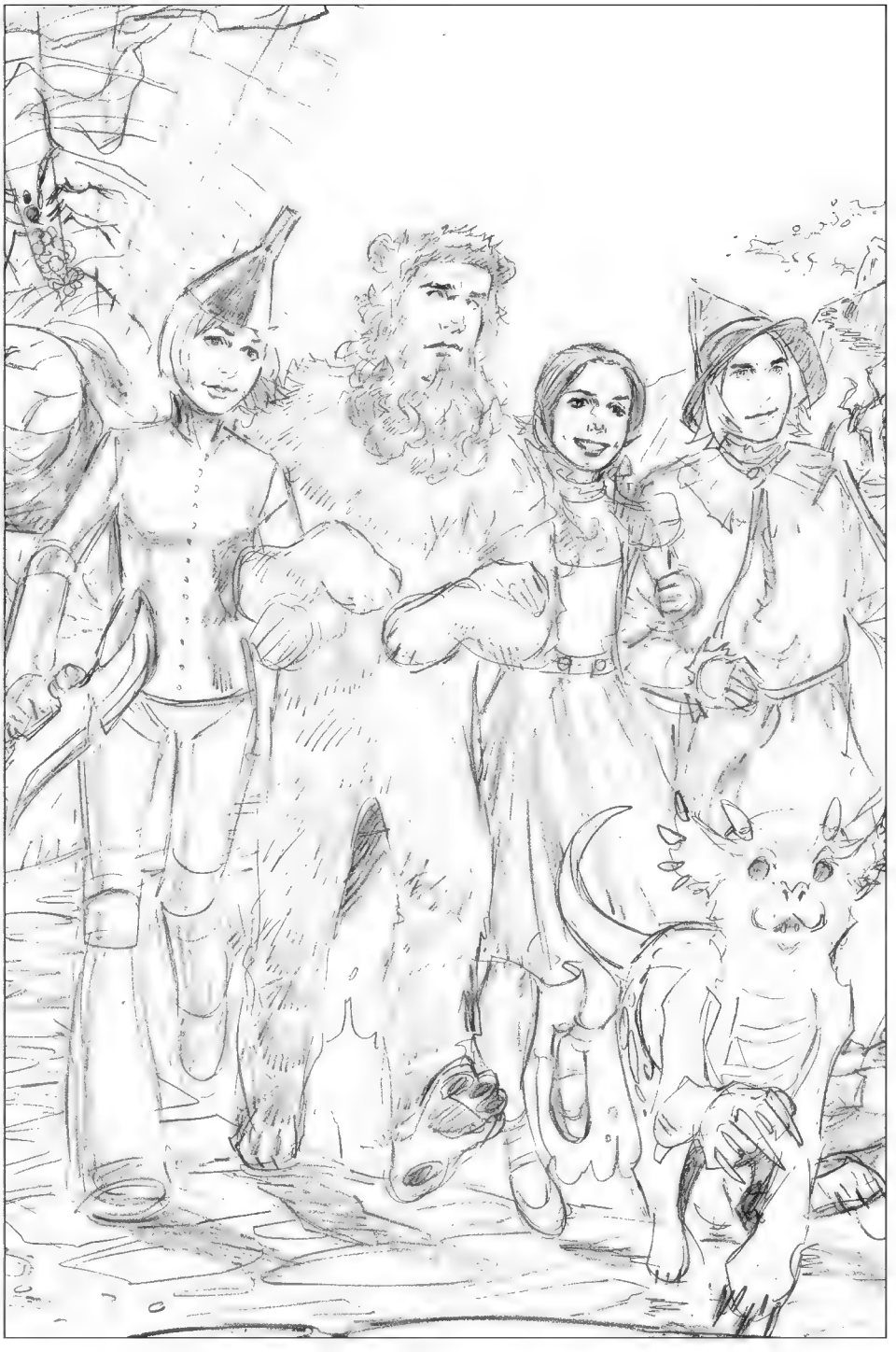
Following pages: Cover art for *Angel & Faith* #13. Standard cover by Steve Morris. Variant cover pencils and inks by Rebekah Isaacs and colors by Dan Jackson. Steve and Rebekah worked together to create this spread image showing our heroes ready for battle in Quor'toth.

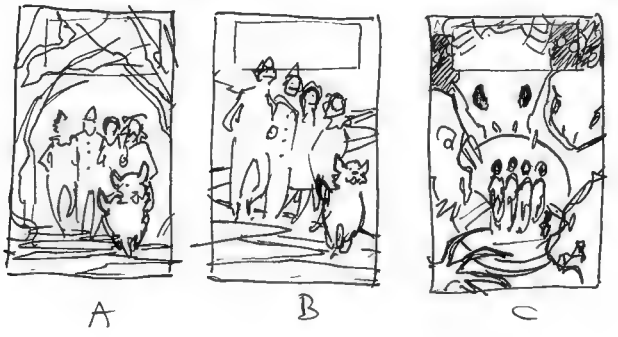
Rebekah's design for the living demon Quor'toth. Shown in action, opposite. As you can see from these two pages, Rebekah displays a great aptitude for designing big monsters. She even manages to make some sharp-toothed demons look kinda adorable.



Left: Inks for *Angel & Faith* issue #13, page 9. The crew realizes that Quor'toth is not just the name of the dimension, but also a frightening Old One.

Above and below: More designs from Rebekah for the denizens of Quor'toth.




A
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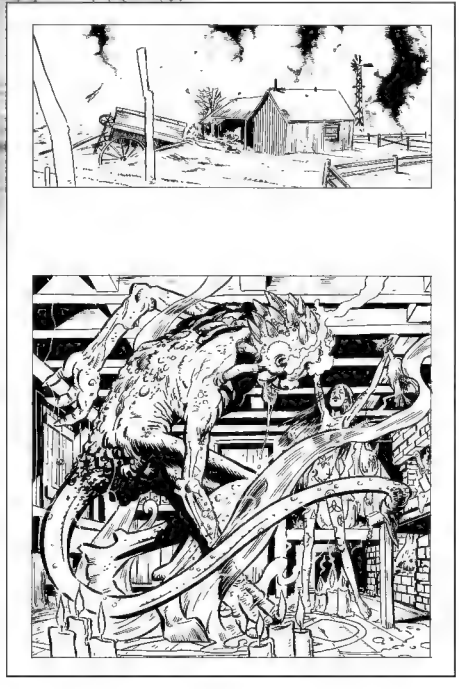
Angel & Faith #14 final variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Rebekah Isaacs and colors by Dan Jackson. Inspired by the film poster for *The Wizard of Oz*.

Opposite: Initial thumbnail sketches and cover pencils for the *Angel & Faith* #14 variant cover.

Angel & Faith Volume 3: *Family Reunion* cover art, by Steve Morris.

Angel & Faith #15 final variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Rebekah Isaacs and colors by Dan Jackson. Inspired by the back-cover photo on the 1972 David Bowie album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars.*

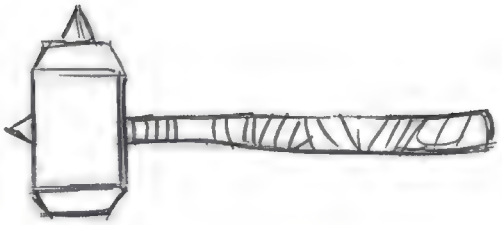


Rough pencils and inks for *Angel & Faith* #15 Part 2, page 14, by David Lapham. Finally, in issue #15, we were able to tell the origin story for Pearl and Nash, the creepy twins who want revenge against Angel—among other things.

Rough pencils and inks for *Angel & Faith* #15 Part 2, page 17, by David Lapham. Learning more about Pearl and Nash, we discover their true intentions—creating a new world, inhabited by a new race.

This page and the following: Designs for the lizard-like demon gang in *Spike: A Dark Place,* by series artist Paul Lee.

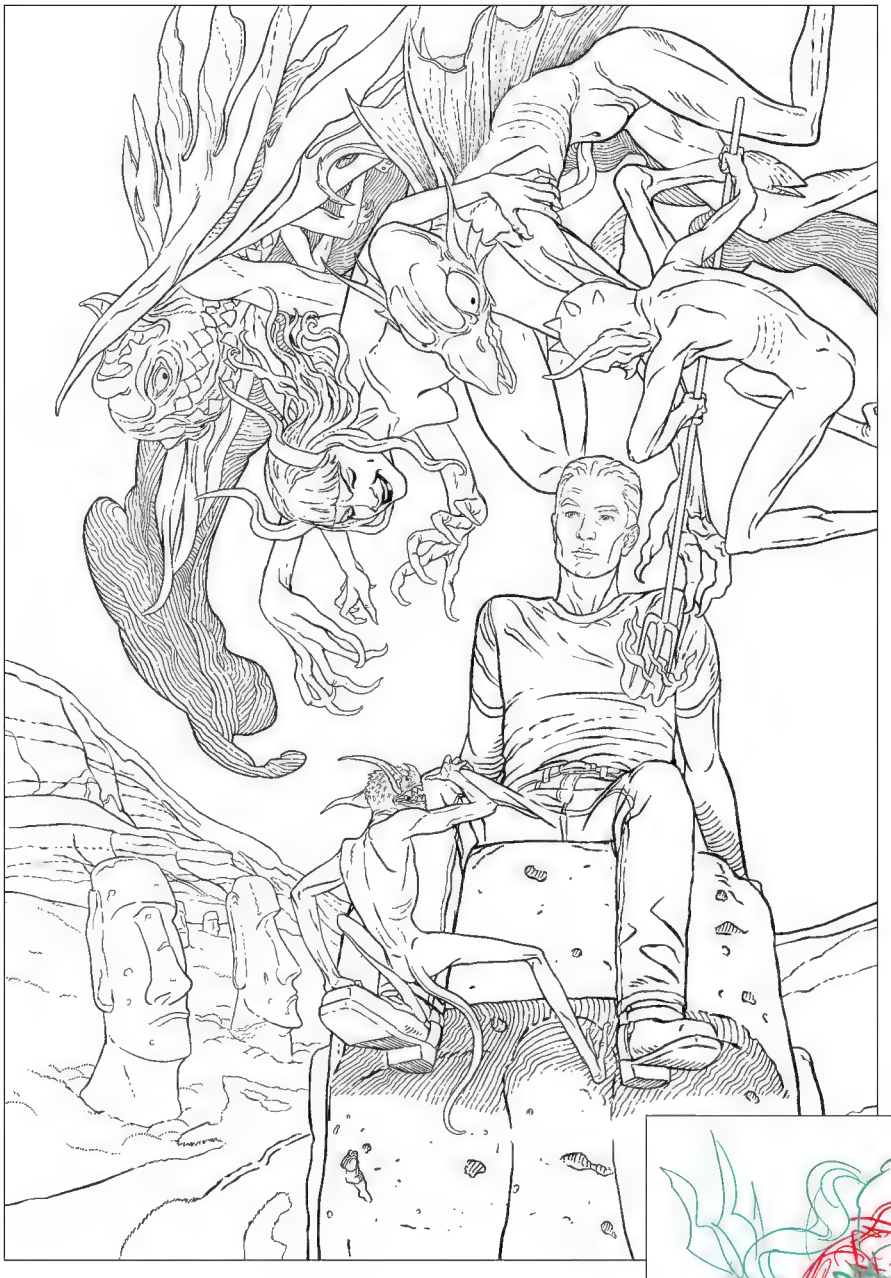
Opposite: Spike: A Dark Place #1 variant cover art, by Steve Morris.



Spike: A Dark Place #2 variant cover art, by Steve Morris.

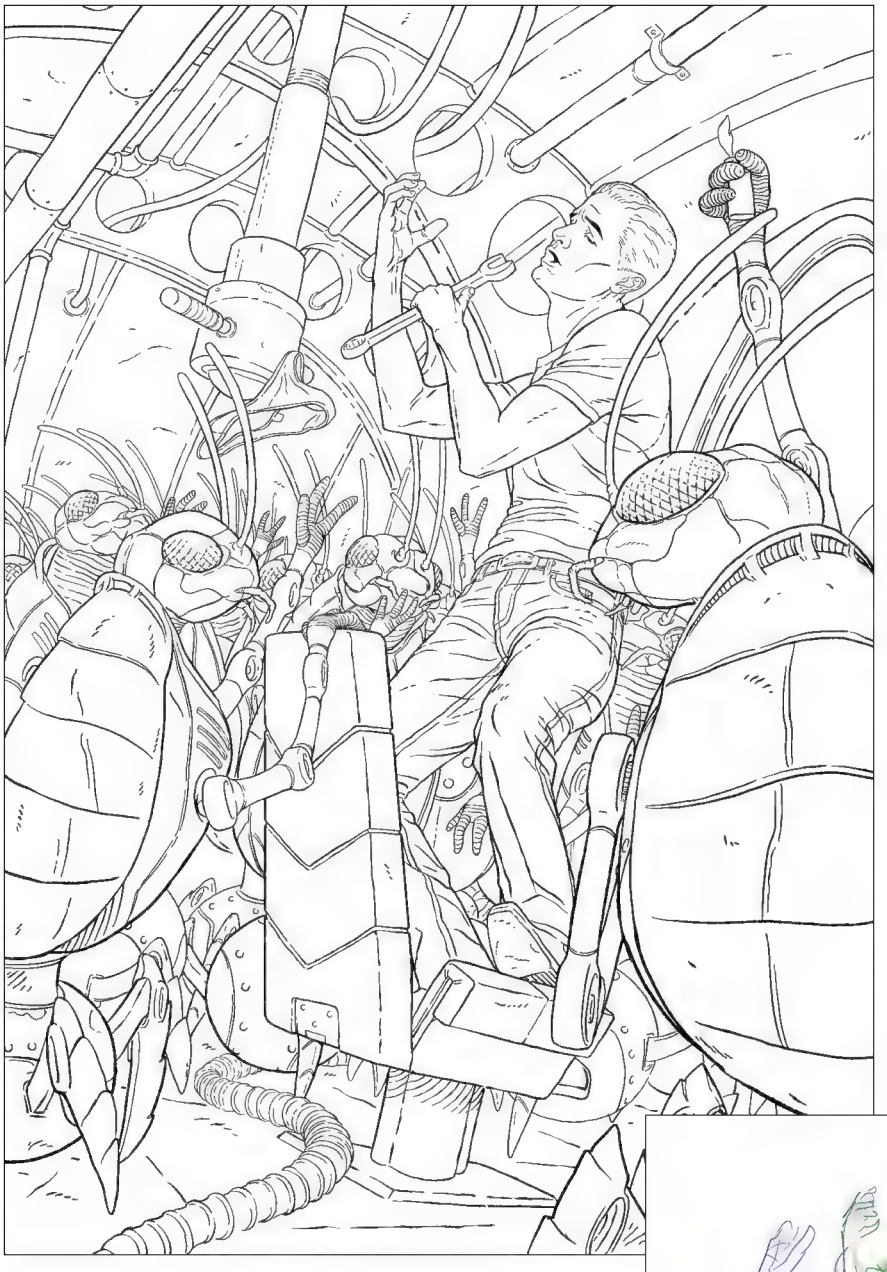
Morgan, the succubus demon after Spike's heart and head. Designs by Paul Lee.

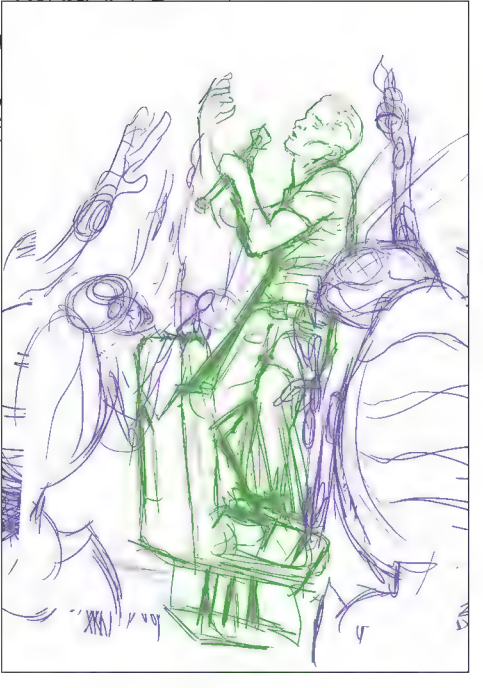
Opposite: Spike: A Dark Place #3 variant cover art, by Steve Morris. The background of this particular cover calls back to the end of Season 8, when Buffy destroyed the Seed of Wonder, the source of all magic. The wonderful graffiti plays on that fact and showcases our favorite little demon from Mutant Enemy. *Grr, argh!*



Sketch and line art for *Spike: A Dark Place* #4 variant cover art.

Opposite: Spike: A Dark Place #4 variant cover art, by Steve Morris.





Sketch and line art for *Spike: A Dark Place* #5 variant cover art.

Opposite: Spike: A Dark Place #5 variant cover art, by Steve Morris.

Following page: Spike: A Dark Place collection cover art, by Jo Chen.

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, producer, and director JOSS WHEDON began writing feature films and acting as a "script doctor" in the 1990s. He introduced the character for which he is most well known in his script for the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film (1992).

In 1997 Whedon founded Mutant Enemy Productions so that he could coproduce the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series ran from 1997 to 2003, giving birth to Whedon's cultlike fan following, and led to a spinoff series, *Angel*, as well as comics series based on both shows. In 2002, Whedon produced and wrote the television series *Firefly*, which eventually led to a feature film titled *Serenity* (2005), as well as more comics. In 2008, Whedon produced and cowrote, with his brothers Zack and Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen, the Emmy-winning online series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—again leading to a comics series. His most recently produced television work, *Dollhouse*, created with Jed Whedon and Tancharoen, premiered in 2009. He wrote and directed one of the most ambitious and successful feature films to date: *The Avengers*, based on the Marvel Comics superhero team, along with its sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. He also directed, produced, and composed original music for a film adaptation of the Shakespeare play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Comics written by Whedon include *Fray* and *Buffy* Seasons 8 and 9, both series based in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* universe, and *Sugarshock*, all for Dark Horse Comics, and *Runaways* and *Astonishing X-Men* for Marvel Comics.

CHRISTOS GAGE is a Greek American writer of comics, television, movies, graphic novels, and video games. He is a graduate of Brown University and the American Film Institute, from which he received a master's in screenwriting. In addition to writing *Angel & Faith* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 10 for Dark Horse, he has provided scripts for titles including *Deadshot* for DC Comics, *Red Sonja* for Dynamite, and *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Iron Man*, and the entire forty-issue run of *Avengers Academy* for Marvel Comics, among many others. With his wife Ruth Fletcher Gage as a frequent collaborator, he has written for the television shows *Numb3rs* and *Law & Order: SVU*, and films including *The Breed*, *Teenage Caveman*, and *Paradox*. He has been nominated for several industry awards, and was the Breakout Talent winner of the 2007 Comics Nexus Awards. Recently, Gage has been writing Marvel's *Daredevil*, an original live-action web series from Netflix airing in 2015.

LEE GARBETT is a British comic book artist. He began his career with the AP Comics short series *Dark Mists*, before moving on to work on various issues of *2000 AD*. In 2007, Garbett started his first project with DC Comics, *The Highwaymen*, leading to work on several DC titles, including *Batman*, *Batgirl*, and *The Outsiders*. Garbett has also worked for Marvel Comics (*Spider-Man*, *Fear Itself: The Deep*), Valiant Entertainment (*X-O Manowar*), and Dark Horse Comics (*Angel & Faith*). Since early 2014 Garbett has been working on *Loki: Agent of Asgard* for Marvel Comics.

Novelist and comic book writer VICTOR GISCHLER was born in central Florida and now lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with his wife and son. He earned a PhD in English at the University of Southern Mississippi. His ongoing love affair with his charcoal grill has led to delusions of grandeur when it comes to barbecuing. Gischler has been nominated for the Edgar and Anthony Awards and was awarded the Black Corsair for adventure fiction in Italy. He has written comic books for Marvel, Dark Horse, Dynamite, and Titan—including runs on *X-Men*, *Deadpool: Merc with a Mouth*, *The Shadow*, and *Punisher Max*. He is currently the Season 10 writer for *Angel & Faith*, after having debuted in the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with the short series *Spike: A Dark Place*.

Artist REBEKAH ISAACS, a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, got her start in comics drawing *The After Hours* for the *Twilight Zone* series of graphic novels from Walker & Co. Soon after, she began as a guest artist on *Hack/Slash* for Devil's Due Publishing before working as a series artist on *Drafted* (Desperado/IDW Publishing) and a *Sheena* miniseries for Devil's Due. Her first mainstream work was a fill-in issue of *Ms. Marvel* with writer Brian Reed for Marvel Comics, immediately followed by WildStorm Comics' miniseries revival of *DV8: Gods and Monsters* with writer Brian Wood. Since then, she has worked on titles including *DMZ* (Vertigo/DC Comics), *Magus* (12 Gauge Comics), and *Captain America and the Falcon* (Marvel). She began her work in illustrating the Buffyverse with

Angel & Faith and continues as series artist on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 10. A native of Dahlonega, Georgia, Rebekah now lives in New York.

DAVID LAPHAM is an award-winning comic book writer and artist. He began his career at Valiant Comics before quickly moving on to work for Jim Shooter at Defiant Comics, where he became the artist on Shooter's *Warriors of Plasm* series. In the mid-1990s, Lapham established his own publishing company, El Capitán Books. He began to write and draw *Stray Bullets*, the two-time Eisner Award–winning series for which he is best known. Over the next ten years, he produced forty issues of *Stray Bullets*, as well as two other series, *Murder Me Dead* and *Amy Racecar Color Special*. In 2005, Lapham took a break from self-publishing (leaving *Stray Bullets* unconcluded) to pursue writing and drawing more mainstream comics—among others, a run of *Detective Comics* featuring Batman and *Tales of the Unexpected*, both from DC Comics; *Young Liars* from DC Comics' Vertigo imprint; *Deadpool Max*, *Age of Apocalypse*, *Daredevil*, and *Spider-Man* from Marvel Comics; and *Predators*, *Kull*, and *Angel & Faith* from Dark Horse Comics. In 2014, in partnership with Image Comics, Lapham successfully concluded *Stray Bullets* and began a new series, *Stray Bullets: Killers*. Lapham is currently writing *The Strain*, with Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, for Dark Horse Comics.

PAUL LEE is a freelance painter, comic book penciler, and children's-book illustrator. He is best known for his cover work and interior pencils for various *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* comics, and his contributions to *Buffy: Tales of the Vampires*, all from Dark Horse Comics. His most recent *Buffy* work was Dark Horse's *Buffy* Season 9 spinoff series *Spike: A Dark Place*. Lee's comics work can also be seen in Marvel Comics' *Amazing Fantasy Starring Spider-Man* and DC's *Batman*, as well as Dark Horse's *The Devil's Footprints*, *The Lone Gunmen*, *Star Wars Tales*, and *Conan*. For the past several years Lee has been working on Lego comics directly for Lego Group and their *Club Magazine*; he is also a Lego Ambassador.

Brazilian artist CLIFF RICHARDS is best known for his work on the original Dark Horse *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comics series that ran from 1998 to 2003, while the television series was still on the air. Over the years, Richards has also drawn for DC Comics' *Birds of Prey* and *Wonder Woman* and for Marvel Comics' *Rogue*, *Excalibur*, and *New Thunderbolts*, among many other titles. Most recently, Richards was the artist for the comics series *Dollhouse*, a five-issue supplement to the television series from creator Joss Whedon, as well as various issues of *Buffy* Seasons 9–10 and *Angel & Faith* Season 10, and the graphic novel adaptation of the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

SPIKE: A DARK PLACE: pencil roughs, pages 231–244, by Cliff Richards; pencils, pages 231–244, by Paul Lee

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This volume reprints *Angel & Faith* #11–#15 and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Spike—A Dark Place* #1–#5. *Angel & Faith* is based on the television series *Angel*, created by Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt. *Angel & Faith: Family Reunion* takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #5. *Spike: A Dark Place* takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #10.

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"[In *Angel & Faith*] Gage and Isaacs are taking a slightly strange odd couple of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* universe and making it compelling and inviting reading."

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Having begun a seemingly impossible quest to redeem himself from his actions in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8, Angel already has the help of Faith, but when Willow arrives in London, she brings a tempting proposition that could further Angel's scheme. Looking to join forces with the duo to gain access to Angel's son, Connor, Willow hopes to travel to the fearsome hell dimension Quor'toth and restore magic to earth! Elsewhere, on the dark side of the moon, Spike embraces some peace, quiet, and *distance* from Buffy the Vampire Slayer. But when a pack of demons and a succubus rip him from his melancholic reverie, he embarks on an unexpected adventure that reveals some hard truths.

Writer Christos Gage (*Avengers: The Initiative*), series artist Rebekah Isaacs (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 10), and guest artists David Lapham (*Stray Bullets*) and Lee Garbett (*Loki: Agent of Asgard*) take Angel and Faith to a whole new dimension, while writer Victor Gischler (*Angel & Faith* Season 10) and artist Paul Lee (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) take Spike to the moon and back! This library edition contains the third arc of the *Angel & Faith* series, as well as the complete *Spike: A Dark Place*, and features an expanded sketchbook section.

"*Spike: A Dark Place* #1 is definitely a fun read for both new and old *Buffy* fans. The amusing mix of comedy, sci-fi, and horror will keep readers entertained."

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